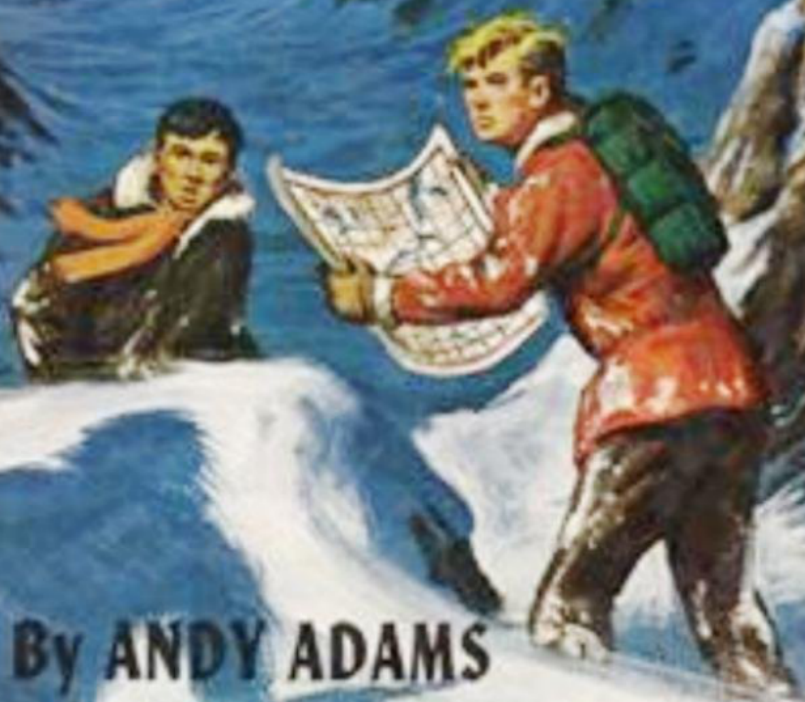


**A RIFF BREWSTER MYSTERY ADVENTURE**

# **Alaska Ghost Glacier Mystery**



**By ANDY ADAMS**

# ALASKA GHOST GLACIER MYSTERY

By ANDY ADAMS

No. 6 in the Biff Brewster Mystery Adventure series

From the dust jacket:

Biff Brewster has learned from hard experience to expect the unexpected, and even before he sets foot on Alaskan soil, he is tingling with anticipation.

Biff has come to fabulous Alaska with his mining engineer father, who is on assignment for the United States Government. Mr. Brewster has brought with him four mysterious boxes, each containing a single item of vital importance to American scientists. Delivery *must* not be delayed.

But “delivery” in Alaska is a word full of hidden danger-Biff and his father must transport the boxes by air and place their lives in the hands of the bush pilot who flies them across the most treacherous terrain known to man.

But Biff has implicit faith in the pilot, and in Tish, a friendly Eskimo boy. When a fierce squall forces them to land on a 75-foot thickness of ice, they have only their two feet to carry them across vast Ghost Glacier to a mine in the ice.

What immensely valuable commodity forces the Brewsters to face a glacier split by hidden crevasses and swept by biting cold winds? Radioactive ore! Is it legend or fact that leads America’s top engineers to Ghost Glacier in search of the precious ore? And if radioactive ore *is* present, can Biff and his father expect sabotage?

Biff Brewster thrills to spine-tingling adventure and excitement in modern Alaska - and you’ll find plenty of both in *all* the Biff Brewster Mystery Adventures.

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6. Alaska Ghost Glacier Mystery, 1961
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A BIFF BREWSTER MYSTER ADVENTURE

ALASKA GHOST GLACIER MYSTERY

By ANDY ADAMS

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*Alaska Ghost Glacier Mystery*

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# CHAPTER I Claim and Counterclaim

“Long distance call for Mr. Thomas Brewster!”

The public-address loudspeaker boomed out the summons over the heads of the passengers deplaning from the great jetliner which had just landed at the Anchorage, Alaska, airport.

“Such popularity, Dad!” said sixteen-year-old Biff Brewster to the square-jawed man in front of him who had paused in surprise on the steps. “In Alaska just two minutes and already you’re wanted on the phone!”

Biff’s father shifted his pipe in his teeth, and glancing back at his son, said, “Now I wonder who that can be?”

“Somebody’s checking on you.” Biff chuckled. Then, noting his father’s faintly disturbed expression, he added, “Probably it’s mother calling from Indianapolis to remind you to wear your rubbers while you’re up here.”

When they heard shuffling of feet and discreet throat-clearing behind them, Biff and his father realized they had caused a small traffic jam, so they hastened to the bottom of the steps.

As Mr. Brewster stepped down to the concrete unloading apron, he steered Biff to one side.

“I’ll go pick up that call,” he said. “Wait here, Biff, and watch for the bush pilot who’ll fly us down to Ghost Glacier Mine-man named Lakum.”

“A what pilot?” Biff asked.

“The wire from Corbin Davis, the mine superintendent, said ‘bush’ pilot, that’s all I know.” Biff’s dad smiled. “Oh, and we’re to meet him at Gate E,” he added. Mr. Brewster pointed out the proper gate with four baggage checks in his right hand.

And at that precise moment, a tall, bearded man in dark glasses took the last step down from the jetliner and walked straight into Tom Brewster’s outstretched hand.

The baggage checks fell fluttering to the damp concrete. Both men scrambled to retrieve them, each insisting that the accident was his fault.

The elegantly tailored man with the beard finally retrieved the wind-blown checks. After wiping them with the fingers of his soft gray gloves, he returned them to Biff's father with a low, old-world bow.

"My apologies, sir," he said in sonorous tones. "Entirely my fault." One side of his precisely trimmed Van Dyke beard curved into a smile. He flipped two manicured fingers toward his round fur hat in a small salute. Then, adjusting the black fur lapels of his top-coat, he clicked his heels and strode off through the crowd.

"Golly," exclaimed Biff with a soft whistle, "the hero in our last school operetta wasn't as elegant as that fellow."

"Mr. Thomas Brewster! Phone call, Alaskan Airlines Reservation Desk!" boomed the airport speaker again.

"Here, Dad, give me those," Biff said, plucking the four baggage checks from his father's hand. "And this," he added, prying a thick brief case from Mr. Brewster's other hand. "You'd better go before your party hangs up. I'll collect the baggage."

"All right, son," Mr. Brewster said, starting off toward the terminal building. He stopped suddenly and added, "Take care of those checks, Biff. Those four boxes are important."

"Right, Dad," Biff called back.

When his father had disappeared in the crowd, Biff turned to take his first look at Alaska.

He was quick to admit to himself that his knowledge of this huge state consisted mainly of vague notions about Eskimos, igloos, and nights that were six months long. There had been no chance to prepare for this trip, for only twelve hours ago he had been standing in the Brewsters' living room in Indianapolis with his mother and his brother and sister, the eleven-year-old twins, Ted and Monica.

And just forty-eight hours ago, he hadn't even dreamed he was coming to Alaska!

But then had come that middle-of-the-night phone



call from Washington, D.C., asking his father's help on a mining problem up here. Tom Brewster was chief field engineer of the Ajax Mining Company and was frequently called into consultation by the government when they were faced with some knotty problem which his extensive experience might solve.

Biff often accompanied his dad on such field trips, and since it was but a week to the start of spring vacation from school, it was decided to let Biff make this trip north.

"So, here I am," mused Biff half aloud. He gazed at some craggy, snow-clad mountains far to the north of the airport. Those were certainly in character, he decided-exactly what one would expect to see in Alaska. But there didn't seem to be any igloos or Eskimos in sight!

They'd probably die of the heat, he thought to himself, glancing at the big airport thermometer.

The temperature in Alaska, according to the gauge, was thirty-seven degrees.

Why, that was twelve degrees *warmer* than it was in Indianapolis. Biff thought. Picking up his father's Gladstone and brief case and his own overnighter, he strolled toward Gate E.

He cast an admiring gaze at the five great jetliners docked wing to wing on the broad unloading apron in front of the terminal building. The five airliners bore the insignia of five different homelands thousands of miles apart on the globe. But here at Anchorage their paths met, for this was the crossroads of inter-hemisphere air travel in the Jet Age.

The make-up of the teeming crowd gave evidence of its international quality. There was a delicate woman in a Hindu sari and a diamond in one nostril. There was a bristly mustached RAF Flight Commander and a homburged diplomat in striped trousers. There was an actor in a belted Vicuna coat, and two girl scouts wearing destination tags on their uniforms.

But, Biff noted unhappily, not a single Eskimo!

Nor was there anyone who looked even remotely like a "bush" pilot. Whatever a "bush" pilot looked like, he thought.

Probably a tall galoot, looking something like Lindbergh-Biff

smiled to himself, letting his romantic imagination ramble-with a long-billed flyer's cap, dark glasses, coveralls, and flying boots.

Someone cleared his throat behind Biff. The boy turned, and there stood a tall galoot, looking something like Lindbergh, with a long-billed flyer's cap, dark glasses, coveralls, and flying boots!

And at his side, a five-by-five-sized carbon copy.

"I'm gonna guess you're a Brewster," drawled the lanky man, pointing at the initials TRB on Biff's father's brief case.

Biff was so surprised at this fulfillment of his mental image of a bush pilot that he was speechless for a moment. But he finally blurted, "Yes, I'm Biff Brewster. My dad's inside answering a phone call."

"I'm Lakum," the lean pilot said, shoving his dark glasses back on his forehead. "Shake."

Biff thrust out his hand.

"No, I mean that's my name," The pilot laughed.

"My Indian passengers say I 'take'um and shake'um butnobreak'um!"

Biff laughed, and he noticed that when the pumpkin-shaped lad by Shake Lakum's side joined in the laughter, his fat cheeks squeezed his brown eyes to slits, and with his wide-spaced teeth showing, he looked for all the world like a jack-o-lantern.

"Oh, this is Tish," said Shake Lakum, noticing Biff's reaction to the brown-skinned lad. "First vice president, chief cook, and head usher of Lakum Air Lines!"

Biff knew that, at last, he was looking at his Eskimo!

"Aloha!" The Eskimo smiled, sticking out his hand.

Nothing could have surprised Biff more than this Hawaiian greeting from an Eskimo. He stopped with his hand halfway to Tish's.

"Aloha, did you say?"

"He's talking Chinook again," Shake chuckled. "It's a kind of Alaskan language made up of Eskimo, French, Spanish, English, pig Latin, and a little Hawaiian."

"Oh!" Biff laughed. "Well, aloha to you," he said, grasping Tish's thick hand. He noticed the Eskimo boy was about his own age.

"How long do you suppose your father will be on the phone, Biff?" Shake asked, flipping the glasses down over his pale blue eyes.

"I don't know," Biff said, glancing toward the terminal building. "Why? Are you expecting some weather?"

"There's supposed to be a small front moving toward Ghost Glacier," the pilot answered. "But if we get going soon, we can beat it there."

"I see," said Biff hesitantly, trying to decide what to do. "Tell you what," he said suddenly. "Why don't Tish and I take these bags to your plane, then go turn in these four baggage checks. You can wait here for Dad, and we'll all meet at your ship."

"Roger, codger," Shake said. "I'll just watch for somebody who looks like you."

"That'll be Dad, poor fella." Biff grinned, picking up his father's bag and brief case. Tish picked up the other bag and said:

"Okay, let's mush."

They took the long walk down to the end of the parking apron where the row of silver jetliners gave way to a forest of mostly single-engined aircraft. There were at least fifty airplanes of every conceivable type, age, and color. The imaginative names inscribed on almost every plane reminded Biff of the names he had seen given to boats on the lake back home. It showed the personal attachment these Alaskan pilots felt for their ships.

As they trudged by the disorderly line of airplanes, Tish was reeling off names: "Buzzy Conlon, from Seward," he murmured. "Tank Morton, from Fairbanks. Micky Swift from Juneau—"

Biff guessed these were the owners' names.

"All bush pilots?" he asked.

"That's right, *Cheechako*" Tish grinned.

"*Cheechako*? What's that?" Biff asked.

"Tenderfoot." The Eskimo lad smiled.

“Well, that’s two words in my Alaskan vocabulary.” Biff laughed.

“And here’s another,” Tish announced, dropping Biff’s bag and sweeping his arm toward a bright yellow Cessna ski-plane with red trimming. “The *Willi-waw*.”

Biff dropped his bags and looked the sleek ship over. “Yours?” he asked.

“Ours,” Tish said proudly.

Biff looked up at the big name lettered in red on the ship’s nose.

“*Williwaw*? What’s that?” he asked.

“A whirlywind,” Tish said. “We get a lot of them this time of year.” He flipped his glasses down in an exact imitation of Shake Lakum, and looked toward the southeast. “I hope we don’t get one today.”

“Which reminds me,” Biff said. “We’d better load the bags and then go over and get those four boxes my dad was talking about.”

They opened the side door of the *Williwaiv* and slid the bags in behind the seats. As Tish slammed the door shut, he glanced at the gas tank cover on the wing and wiped away a smear of some oily substance with his forefinger.

Biff could tell by the gesture that the Eskimo lad was pretty particular about the appearance of the *Williwaw*. Tish raised his finger to sniff the brown smear he had wiped away.

“Hm,” he murmured, wrinkling his brow. “I don’t know what *that* is.” He rubbed the stuff between his fingers, then shrugged his shoulders and said, “Okay, mush.”

“That word even a *cheechako* knows,” Biff chuckled. “Come on—I’ll out-mush you!” He started running toward the terminal building.

Biff was astounded at the ease with which the roly-poly Eskimo kept pace with him. Having been a dash man on his school track team, Biff was a little proud of his running ability. But Tish glided along silently beside him no matter how fast he ran.

As Biff puffed to a stop at the door marked baggage, he said, “Say, you skim along like a panther in those boots.” He looked down at the

soft-topped footwear. He noticed that the soles seemed made of a different kind of leather from the tops.

“They’re *muk-luks*” Tish said. “Caribou tops and moose-hide soles.”

“I’ll wrestle you for them sometime,” Biff offered, smiling.

“You’re on,” the Eskimo said as they reached the baggage counter.

Biff handed the checks to the clerk, who turned and disappeared behind a tier of baggage racks.

When he returned, he was rolling a small baggage dolly holding two boxes and two medium-sized leather bags. Biff had never seen the two bags before.

“Are you sure these are mine?” he said, pointing to the bags. “I believe the checks are for four boxes.”

The clerk compared the checks with the tags on the bags. “Nope, same numbers,” he said. Then he scratched his head. “You know, that’s funny. There was a man here about five minutes ago, and he picked up two bags and two boxes just like this. Do you suppose you could have gotten your checks mixed?”

“I don’t think so,” Biff said. “What did the man look like?”

“Looked like a duke,” the clerk said, grinning. “Real snazzy beard, fur hat, dark glasses-“

The description rang a bell with Biff.

That was the elegant character who had knocked the baggage checks from his father’s hand!

“Which way did he go?” Biff asked the clerk excitedly.

“Out toward the parking lot,” the clerk said, pointing toward some double doors across the way.

“Come on, Tish,” Biff snapped. “We’ve got to see a man about some boxes!”

But Tish was already leading Biff by a *muk-luk*!

## CHAPTER II Hot Cargo

AS THE two boys raced through the double doors, they swept the parking area with their eyes, looking for the elegant man who fitted the clerk's description.

They had little trouble spotting him. His aristocratic head stuck up above the car tops about fifty feet away. Even from this distance, Biff could see that the man was looking down at something on the tail gate of an expensive station wagon.

"There's the duke!" Biff exclaimed, heading toward the elegantly tailored figure.

As they hurried up to the station wagon, they could see the man tapping the edge of one of the boxes with a hammer.

"I beg your pardon," Biff said, trotting to a stop beside the man.

"Oh, these must be your boxes," the bearded man said in the same organ tones Biff recalled from their first meeting. "I saw no name on them and assumed my manservant had packed something for me and neglected to tell me. I *do* beg your pardon!"

Biff smiled into the man's dark glasses but could see no expression there because of their extreme opaqueness.

"That's perfectly all right," the blond boy answered. "We must have gotten the baggage checks mixed when we had our little accident."

"Yes, of course, of course," purred the man. "Ah, well. No harm done." He gestured toward the boxes.

Biff slid the nearest box off the tail gate. Tish grabbed the one which the bearded man had been nailing shut with the hammer.

As Biff thanked the man and started back toward the baggage room, he noticed his father's name clearly imprinted on the shipping label. He thought it strange that the bearded man hadn't noticed it.

He glanced back to see the man sliding into the front seat of the station wagon.

“Oh, your two bags are at the baggage counter, sir,” Biff called to him.

“Oh, the bags,” the man stammered. “Yes, yes- of course.”

“How about that?” Biff said from the corner of his mouth. “The duke doesn’t remember little trifles like bags.”

“His butler wasn’t here to remind him.” Tish laughed.

The boys hurried back through the double doors, retrieved the other two boxes from the baggage counter, then made for the *Williwaw*.

“Boy, these must be wrapped in lead!” Tish puffed under the double load. “What’s in ‘em?”

“I don’t know,” Biff answered. “Dad just said there were four boxes and they were important. They were sent to him from Washington. He had them transferred to our flight in Indianapolis, so this is the first time I’ve seen them.”

When they reached the parking ramp, Biff’s father was pacing anxiously up and down in front of the *Williwaw*. Shake was already at the controls warming up the plane.

“Our pilot is getting anxious about the weather en route,” Mr. Brewster said. “Let’s hurry and get aboard.”

They loaded the boxes and climbed in-Biff and his father in back and Tish in the co-pilot’s seat next to Shake.

Shake eased the *Williwaw* forward on its skis, squeezed past the densely packed airplanes and on to the taxi strip. They watched one of the jetliners take off, then moved forward to the edge of the runway where Shake called the control tower.

He checked the weather, and Biff heard the tower man confirm Shake’s fears of the fast-moving cold front they would be racing to Ghost Glacier.

A moment ago, the huge jet had taken the length of three football fields to get off the ground. When Shake received his go-ahead from the tower and rammed the throttle forward, the *Williwaw* needed only as much as a good end run.

When they reached cruising altitude, Shake banked out over the edge of Anchorage and set a southeasterly course. Then the bush pilot lifted his hands from the wheel, nodded to Tish, and the Eskimo lad took over the controls.

“Hope the quick take-off didn’t make you nervous,” the bush pilot said to his passengers.

“It was a little faster than I’m used to,” Biff’s dad admitted.

“Can’t get used to having runway to spare.” Shake Lakum smiled. “Where we fly, there’s *never* enough runway, and I get used to yanking her up in a hurry.”

“I suppose you do fly in and out of some pretty rugged country,” Tom Brewster said.

“Yes,” drawled Shake Lakum, glancing back at the glitter of stainless steel, marble, and glass that was Anchorage. “There are more people in that one town than we see in our territory in a whole year.”

Tish pointed toward the craggy mountains running parallel with their flight path. “Now that’s normal for us,” he said. “The Chugach Mountains. Or that over there,” he added, pointing toward the ragged edge of a great body of water looming up to the south. “Prince William Sound.”

“Or that down there?” asked Biff, pointing to the great, unbroken forest of spruce and pine that lay between mountains and water.

“That too.” Shake grinned.

“Is all this the bush?” Biff asked.

“That’s what they call it,” Shake answered. “Although I’ve put down in some mighty un-bushy places in this bush!”

“Remember last Christmas Eve?” Tish reminded him, “when you had to fly that prospector with the broken hip in from Gakona to Cordova?”

Shake bobbed his head slowly, smiling with the recollection.

“Shake hit a blizzard and thought he was going to have to land in a volcano. That’s all he could see through the snow!” Tish said.

“Volcano?” Biff repeated. “In Alaska?”



“Mt. Wrangell’s the one I almost wound up in,” Shake said. “But we’ve got a couple of hundred more in Alaska-including some dead ones!”

“Well, I’ll be!” Biff murmured, adding the fact to his rapidly accumulating stock of Alaska lore. “Where did you finally put down?”

“On some river ice,” Shake said casually.

“Remember the Thanksgiving Day you ran into the O-O ice fog near Kateel canyon?” Tish asked, warming to the recollections of his hero’s feats now.

“Yep, it’s always a holiday, seems like.” Shake grinned.

“What’s an O-O ice fog, and what happened?” Biff inquired curiously.

“Ceiling zero, visibility same,” supplied Shake. “Ice fog is made up of water vapor that’s frozen into ice particles.”

“It’s called a white-out. And you better get down and out of that,” said Tish. “Right, Shake?”

“Right,” the bush pilot answered. “This Thanksgiving, I got down on a gravel bar with a couple and their baby. It went down to fifty-five below. We cut down thirty-eight spruce trees to keep the fire going that night. Tea would freeze three feet from the fire. I had to drain the oil from the engine and keep it warm near the fire. If I hadn’t, it would have frozen

in the block and we would never have been able to start the engine. We had hot tea, sakines, and two chocolate bars for Thanksgiving dinner.”

“Never forget the time you started to land on the mud flats at Valdez and the tide had covered them so that movie director thought you were going to land in the drink,” Tish laughed.

“Yeah, he cancelled plans for his Alaska picture the minute we slid up on the beach.” Shake laughed heart-fly.

“Do you ever make any-uh-normal landings?” Biff asked.

“In the bush, no landing is normal,” Shake said. “We play them all by ear.”

“It’s not the kind of airline our friend back in Anchorage would use regularly,” Tish said, winking at Biff over his shoulder.

“Oh, you mean his ‘royal highness,’ who wound up with our boxes?” Biff laughed.

Mr. Brewster snapped suddenly to attention. “What was that about someone and our boxes?” he asked.

“Oh, remember that man with the beard who bumped into you and knocked the baggage checks out of your hand?” Biff asked. “Well, he wound up with a couple of our boxes by mistake. But we got them back.”

“Just in time, too,” said Tish. “I think he’d just opened one. He said it was to see if his man servant had fixed him some caviar sandwiches or something.”

Tom Brewster turned and looked at the boxes behind the seat. “You mean this man opened one of these?” he demanded excitedly.

“Well, yes,” Biff said, puzzled at his father’s sudden concern. “Could he have done any harm?”

“He opened the heaviest box,” said Tish. “The one that ticks.”

“*Ticks?*”

Tom Brewster’s face had turned pale. He spun in his seat and reached for the box that Tish had carried.

“Shake, can we dump this box overboard?” he asked the pilot.

Shake sat up straight. “The door wouldn’t open in this slipstream,” he said.

“Is there anywhere we can land?” Mr. Brewster asked.

Shake took over the *WilHrwarw*>s controls and stared at Tom Brewster’s pale features.

“This isn’t like pulling over to the curb, you know,” said the bush pilot. “Why must we land?”

Tom Brewster looked straight ahead. In a husky voice he said, “I’m afraid that man who had the box loaded it with a time-bomb!”

## CHAPTER III Strike Two

IT WAS as though Biff's father had announced the presence of a rattlesnake in the back seat.

Biff and Tish hunched forward involuntarily, as if to draw away from the deadly cargo.

Shake looked hard at the mining engineer, then swiveled his head slowly to stare at the box. His movements, like everyone's, suddenly had become stiff and restrained-as if a sudden move might set off the explosive cargo.

As one, the four passengers began searching the rugged terrain for some clear spot where they might put down and rid themselves of the ticking monster in the box.

To their left were the Chugach Mountains, a minute ago so picturesque-now cruel and unscalable. Far off to the right, the broad, white-capped sweep of Prince William Sound offered only watery disaster. And below-unbroken forest. No road, no trail, no clearing.

"Not a foot to sit down," Shake muttered. "Not an inch."

Biff finally found his voice. "Dad, what if we *do* land and it's a bumpy landing?"

"All bush landings are bumpy," Shake said, without turning.

Tom Brewster continued to search the ground. "It's probably not a percussion explosive," he said softly.

There was silence for a full minute as necks craned and the *Williwaw* glided lower and lower.

"Not a strip anywhere," Tish said flatly.

"Then there's only one thing to do," Tom Brewster said. He stared at the box from which came the faint ticking sound.

"Dad. You mean disconnect-it?" Biff breathed.

Tom Brewster swung slowly around in his seat, then rose to his knees and looked calmly at the box.

“I’ll need something to pry with,” he said.

Shake felt under his seat, hauled out a canvas-wrapped tool kit, and handed Mr. Brewster a screwdriver.

The square-jawed mining engineer ran his fingers through his hair, took a deep breath, let it out slowly, and inserted the screwdriver under the wooden cover.

They heard the wrench of nails as the cover came loose. Tom Brewster stopped, the screwdriver poised in place. Then he resumed prying.

Shake, Biff noticed, was staring straight ahead, eyes half closed. Tish was glancing down at the floor, his neck muscles tense. Biff was watching a vein throbbing softly in his father’s temple.

They knew by the soft pop that the box cover had come open.

Then Biff let his eyes drop toward the box. His father was reaching into the crate very slowly. There, on top of some cloth-wrapped machinery in the box, lay a long, black cylinder, connected by two wires to a pair of small batteries. Wired in series with this device, was a small, traveling alarm clock.

Ever so delicately, Tom Brewster’s fingers probed at the wires, then slowly he began to unscrew the nuts holding the wires to the battery.

With a quick snap, he pulled one wire loose, then the second. That done, he disconnected the clock and very carefully removed the black cylinder, took out his handkerchief, and wrapped it around the ugly explosive.

“Done,” he said.

Shake Lakum turned his head slowly toward the scene of the dismantling.

Biff and Tish slowly let out the air from their paralyzed lungs.

“Dad,” Biff said hoarsely, “why did the bearded man-why did he put it in there?”

“Because he didn’t want this box to reach Ghost Glacier Mine,” said Tom Brewster, looking calmly down at the black cylinder nestling

in his handkerchief. "That box, the other boxes-and me."

"Don't forget *us*" Shake said, squinting one eye.

"Yes-and I'm sorry," said Tom Brewster. "Believe me, I had no idea there was anything like this in the wind when I accepted this job at the mine. I found it out only when I received that phone call in Anchorage. I was warned of possible sabotage."

"Would it be asking too much for you to tell a poor bush pilot what this is all about?" Shake said, checking his compass as he spoke.

"Yes, Dad," Biff said. "What's in those boxes that would make anybody- want to blow them up?"

"Well," said his father, gazing out over the limitless wilderness sliding beneath the wing so picturesquely once more. "For the boxes to make sense, I'd have to start with the story of the mine at Ghost Glacier." The mining engineer reached for his pipe.

"And does that story start with an old prospector named Lank Leominister?" drawled Shake Lakum.

Biff's father looked at the pilot in surprise. "What do you know about Lank Leominister?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing, except that his ghost is supposed to haunt that Ghost Glacier we're heading for."

"Did you ever know him?" Biff asked.

"Oh, I don't think anybody up here really knew Lank," Shake answered, "except his Indian friend, Aniak. Lank was a brain, I'm sure of that now."

"Why do you say *noiv*?" Tom Brewster asked.

"Because when he was alive and roaming the mountains about fifteen years ago, I thought he was a nut and so did everybody else. We thought that anybody who would pass up gold ore to chase an old Indian legend around the mountains must be 'teched'." Shake looked squarely at Tom Brewster. "But it turned out that what he was looking for wasn't a legend after all, right?"

A tiny smile was playing around Mr. Brewster's eyes. "Are you convinced this information is authentic?" he asked quietly.

“As authentic as the Alaska grapevine can offer.” Shake laughed.

“Alaska grapevine?” Biff repeated.

“Yeah-the gossip network,” Shake explained. “You see, the biggest state in the Union is like the smallest town in the world. You wink at a girl in Anchorage this morning, and they’ll be gossipin’ about it in Cordova tonight.”

“Well,” said Tom Brewster, “exactly *what* does the Alaska grapevine say we’re looking for at Ghost Glacier?”

“Well, sir,” Shake said slowly, “the grapevine says that you fellas have toted an atomic reactor into that glacier and that you are using that for power to mine that big ice cube for the stuff Lank chased all over these mountains. The most radioactive ore ever discovered! “

There was a two-second pause, and then everyone started talking at once.

“Atomic reactor!” said Tish.

“Radioactive ore!” exclaimed Biff.

“Am I right?” Shake smiled.

Biff knew by the answering smile on his dad’s face that Shake was one hundred per cent right.

“Golly! What’s this ore called, Dad?” Biff said.

“Science hasn’t given it a name yet,” Mr. Brewster replied.

“The Tlingit Indians called it Moon Ore,” Tish said.

“Why Moon Ore?” Biff asked.

“I don’t know,” Tish said. “It’s just part of the legend.”

“Do you know, Dad?”

“No,” said Tom Brewster, following Shake’s gaze toward the boiling clouds on the horizon ahead. “All we know is what he wrote us in his notes.”

“Wrote you?” asked Biff, puzzled.

“Yes,” the mining engineer said, dragging on his pipe. “About eighteen years ago, certain scientific departments in Washington began getting these strange letters from a man named L. Leominister in Alaska. They were, to say the least, eccentrically composed. Some of them arrived with postage due, incomplete addresses, and just barely legible. They spoke of the search for an amazing deposit of an incredible ore- which Mr. Leominister never named or produced. It was clear he was suggesting the deposit was radioactive. In fact, he sent figures on the radiation count which appeared fantastic. Well, because of the nature of the letters and the fantastic claims, the letters were put down as the work of a crank. They became a joke in Washington and were even set aside in a special file. Then suddenly, the Lank Leominister letters stopped coming.”

“What happened to him?” Biff asked.

“He was lost in one of the crevasses of that glacier we’re heading for,” Shake said, glancing worriedly at the thickening weather ahead.

“Yes,” continued Tom Brewster, “and when the letters stopped coming, Mr. Leominister was forgotten. But when a sample of this ore came into our possession, the letters were revived, studied as they had never been studied before, and this project was launched at Ghost Glacier.”

“Then you know the ore does exist?” Biff said.

“One chunk of it,” said Tom Brewster.

“One chunk?” said Shake Lakum incredulously.

“That’s right,” said Tom Brewster. “It came into our possession some years after Lank Leominister’s letters stopped arriving. It tested out so high in radioactivity it promised to cut the cost of making fissionable material by a thousand per cent.”

Biff knew that fissionable material was the stuff which made H-bombs and atomic reactors work and that it was smelted from radioactive ore.

“Where’s that chunk of ore now?” Shake Lakum asked.

“Well,” Mr. Brewster sighed. “Unfortunately it disappeared.”

Biff sat up straight. “Disappeared!”

“At the time, it was explained that the ore sample simply got lost because no one considered it very important,” said Tom Brewster, puffing slowly on his pipe. Then, glancing at the box which had started this story, he added, “But after today I’m not so sure about that.”

“But even though you don’t have that ore sample, you do know where the main ore body is, don’t you?” asked Shake, casting a worried glance at the grayness that was beginning to creep around them.

“Not exactly,” said Tom Brewster. “His letters give us a pretty good lead. But, as I say, he was eccentric in his writing habits, and they are pretty difficult to decipher. In addition to that, it is felt that there may be some of his notes on the subject which are not in our possession.”

“So meanwhile,” drawled Shake, “you’re just rootin’ around inside that old glacier hoping to stumble on the mother lode.” Shake cocked his head and added, “That is, if there is a mother lode.”

“Or maybe stumble on oF Lank himself,” Tish spoke up. “He’s supposed to be sitting inside that glacier, you know-looking just like he did the day he disappeared!”

Biff was just about to make a derisive comment regarding boogie men when Shake exclaimed, “Looks like our race with the weather ended in a tie!”

They gazed out at the boiling gray clouds through which they had begun to fly. Biff had been so enthralled by the Ghost Glacier story that he hadn’t noticed the thickening weather or the change in terrain below. He could catch only glimpses of the earth. Suddenly, he saw something that made his heart pound.

Winding toward them from the far horizon was what appeared to be a river of solid ice. It snaked its way between the ridges of the mountains below- beginning as a narrow, white ribbon in the distance and fanning out almost directly in front of them into a solid wall of ice that ended abruptly at the edge of a broad, turgid river. Separating the ice cliff and the river was a sloping, muddy beach.

“Ghost Glacier!” Biff breathed.

Then the mists drifted across the scene, and Biff looked up at Tish.



“Is that whole, long thing all *ice*?”

“All ice,” his dad answered. “About a thousand years of snowstorms, *turned* to ice by their own weight. The snow collects in those high-walled valleys, it can’t melt because of the altitude and the short summers, and it just keeps piling up until it gets hundreds of feet thick.”

“And it keeps sliding down the valley to the river,” Tish finished.

“And our mine is inside that sliding glacier?” Biff said.

“That’s where it is,” his father said.

Biff gave a soft whistle.

“I believe we’d better go downstairs and see how low to the ground this stuff goes,” Shake said.

“Left gas tank getting kind of low,” Tish reported. “Shall I switch to the other?”

“Go ahead,” Shake answered, still searching for a hole in the gray clouds below.

Tish threw the switch that changed the fuel supply from the left to the right gas tank.

And the engine coughed!

## CHAPTER IV On Top of Ol' Ghosty

A TINY little worry line appeared between Shake's eyes.

He reached for the gas tank switch, flipped it back to the left tank. Immediately, the motor purred. But when he switched back to the right tank again, the engine coughed and missed.

Shake glanced at the needle on the gas gauge. "Why should it cough when it reads full?" he asked nobody in particular. Quickly returning to the left tank, he looked at the others in the plane. "Small problem," he said. "Right tank full of gas, but no workee-left tank workee fine but-" He pointed to the gas gauge. The needle was bouncing against the bigE.

"How much have we got?" Tom Brewster asked.

Shake squinted at the gauge. "About five minutes' worth," he said.

Biff looked down as Shake spoke. Through a ragged hole in the haze he could see the peaks of the mountain ridge and the turgid river.

Shake banked the plane sharply to dive through the hole. The bush pilot put the *Williwaw* into a tight spiral, trying to stay in the clear funnel reaching toward the ground.

They could catch glimpses of the mud flats as they glided toward the earth, but it was certain the murk reached almost to the ground.

Shake had the engines revved back almost to stalling speed to conserve fuel. He was leaning forward trying to see exactly where he was, whether they were over any point on the beach where he could land. But the murk would not thin. It was lying on the ground itself.

There was a sudden metallic "*wiring*" which caused Shake to cock his head to try and identify the sound. Then another-"Whing!"

It sounded like something metallic snapping under strain, but the ship was acting perfectly normally.

Then the grayness slid in front of the prop and shut off the ground completely. Shake hauled back on the wheel, rammed the throttle

forward, and the *Williuiw* began to climb with a harsh growl.

They popped up to the top of the cloud cover, and Shake eased the stick forward to flatten the flight-path.

“I’m afraid to make another pass at the flats,” he said. “If we didn’t make it, we wouldn’t have enough gas left for any other move.”

“Is there another move open to us?” Tom Brewster asked.

Shake bit his lip for a moment as the others stared

at him. His jaw tightened, and he banked the plane hard left, fattened out, and kept looking ahead beneath his left wing. Then with a “Cross your mittens,” he nosed the *Williwaw* into the murk like a diving sub. A sea of gray closed in around them. Shake strained forward, looking for the first sign of a hole in the mist. Mr. Brewster’s knuckles were turning slowly white as the mining engineer gripped his knees. Biff and Tish were sitting bolt upright, waiting-

Suddenly, Shake yanked back on the wheel-they felt their heads driven down between their shoulders as the *Williwaw* flattened out.

And then, as if they had popped out of a dark room into sunshine-there was a bright, clear light!

A shiny, white plateau was rocketing past, only ten or twelve feet beneath their skis.

Just above their wings, about twenty feet above, was the bottom of the haze through which they had dived. They were sandwiched in between ice and clouds-racing like a meteor.

Then Shake said, “Bumps-a-daisy,” and the *Willi-iva*. ‘w touched down. They could tell by the feel of the plane’s skis ripping across the snow that they were landing much too fast, but there was no stopping now.

The *Williwaw* skimmed, then bounced, then bumped across the corduroy surface. Finally with a great squeal of steel on ice, the plane jolted to a stop.

Tish was the first to catch his breath. He said, “Take ‘um, shake ‘um, but don’t break-‘um-Lakum.”

“As advertised,” echoed Shake Lakum.

Tom Brewster looked around at the icy strip on .which they had landed, then at the low-hanging mist, and finally at Shake Lakum.

“How did you know we’d find clear air right in this particular spot?” he asked.

“When the ceiling’s low, there’s always a layer of clear air right over a glacier,” Shake answered.

“Glacier!” Biff exclaimed. “Are we on top of a glacier?”

“Oh, excuse the head usher for not announcing same,” Shake chuckled. “We’re sitting on top of Ghost Glacier!”

Biff looked around at the forbidding stretch of ice. “And the mine?”

Shake pointed toward the floor. “Straight down through this ice-about seven hundred feet,” he said.

“But it might as well be seven hundred miles!” said Tom Brewster.

“Not necessarily,” said Shake. “Let’s get out, look at this right gas tank, and see how far up the creek we are.”

They piled out of the *Williwaia*, and Shake walked around to the nose of the ship and lifted the engine cowl.

The others watched silently as the lanky pilot ducked his head beneath the cover. They heard him tinkering with the power plant.

Biff pulled his coat up around his ears. The wind was whipping across the desolate ice-the most desolate, lifeless surface he had ever walked on in his life.

It was as though they were on another planet. And in the far haze on each side, black walls of rock rose straight in the air-the mountains that hemmed in this ancient glacier.

“Oh, oh!”

It was Shake, exclaiming from under the hood. The bush pilot raised up slowly, his finger extended. Some brown, oily fluid was dripping from the end of his finger.

“Found this in the gas line from the right tank,” he said grimly.

Tish was staring at the stuff-then at Biff. Each suddenly remembered the oily brown smear that Tish had wiped off the wing while they were loading the baggage aboard just a few hours ago.

“Shake, I saw some of that stuff on the wing near the gas tank earlier today,” the Eskimo said. “Somebody must have poured it in the tank and dripped some!”

Shake ducked under the wing, unscrewed the gas tank cover, and aimed a flashlight into the tank. Slowly he nodded his head.

“Tank’s full of it,” he said. “Somebody must have dropped it in there while we were away from the ship.”

Tom Brewster pounded his fist in his hand. “What won’t these people do to keep us from getting to the mine!” he said.

Shake grinned. “Well,” he said, “they haven’t stopped us yet. I’ve got a spare tin of gas. We’ll just drain this fouled tank, then when the weather clears, we’ll be up and at ‘em again.”

“I appreciate your taking up my battle,” Mr. Brewster said, smiling.

“Oh, now it’s my battle,” Shake answered, preparing to unscrew the petcock on the right tank and drain the contaminated gas. “When they sabotage a mine, they just got the government to contend with. But when they start fouling up the *Williwaw*, they have a fight on their hands.”

“I wonder when this mist will clear?” Biff asked.

“Oh, by morning,” said Shake.

“There is no way we can contact the mine I suppose?” Biff’s father asked.

“We could radio them,” Shake answered.

“You mean they have radio down there?” Mr. Brewster said.

“Yes,” Shake said hesitantly. “But there’s really not much they can do for us, and I hesitate to put a drain on our battery by using the radio. We might need the battery for something more important later on. Like getting off here.”

“I can understand your concern,” Mr. Brewster said, “but you see,

I haven't explained to you about the boxes."

"No-you haven't, come to think of it," said Shake.

They looked in at the four boxes which had caused their stranded little party to be the object of so much attempted violence.

"Corbin Davis, the mine superintendent, must be told of our situation," Tom Brewster said. "You see, these boxes contain radiation control units for the atomic reactor."

"And you think they'll be kind of anxious about them down below?" asked Shake.

"Extremely so," said Biff's dad.

"Then we'll call," said Shake. He climbed into the *Williwaiv*, switched on the radio, cranked the tuner to locate the mine frequency, then started his call. He gave his plane number slowly and clearly, explained he was calling Ghost Glacier Mine, and concluded, "Do you read?"

"do we read!" boomed a voice from out of the speaker. "Where in the world are you? On top of our antenna?"

"Just about," laughed the lanky pilot. "We're on your roof. There's a man named Tom Brewster here who's awfully anxious to talk to Corbin Davis."

"Corbin Davis here!" boomed a heavier voice, from the background at the other end. Then, moving on-mike, he bellowed, "Hello, Brewster! Are you up there?"

"Right here!" Biff's dad replied as Shake handed him the microphone and slid out of the pilot's seat so Mr. Brewster could slide in.

"Tom," they heard Corbin Davis say urgently, "do you have the control units? Are they all right?"

"Yes, they're all right," Biff's dad answered.

"Tom," said the heavy-voiced man, "we must have those control units down here as soon as you can reach us."

"But, Corbin-" Biff's father began.

“We *must* have them, Tom,” Corbin Davis’ voice was husky with strain. “Or the reactor will fail and so will the Ghost Glacier project!”

## CHAPTER V Glacier Excursion

THERE was no mistaking the urgency of the mine boss's tone.

"Can we get them to him?" Tom Brewster asked Shake.

The pilot looked at the swirling clouds. "Yeah, if we want to walk," Shake said in a joking tone.

Tom Brewster turned back to the microphone. "We'll walk them down to you, Corbin," he said.

"Wait!" Shake protested, surprised that he had been taken seriously.

"You did say walk?" Mr. Brewster asked blandly.

Shake heaved a sigh. "I said walk," he admitted. He looked out across the cold glacier top, then at the boys. "The sourdoughs used to walk across these things on the way to the Klondike. I guess we can."

"Good." Mr. Brewster smiled. "We may be able to get there before the reactor stops."

"What if it *should* stop?" Shake asked. "Couldn't they start it again?"

"It's not quite like starting your airplane engine," the mining engineer said. "It's a major project, requiring incalculable scientific readjustment, and a whole different crew of experts. And don't forget, every electrical circuit, every machine, everything *in* the mine down there depends on the reactor for power. Without it, everything stops."

"Which is probably just what your mysterious friends are counting on," Shake said.

"Exactly," said Tom Brewster.

"Incidentally, Dad," Biff interrupted, "what's happened to the control units they have been using in the reactor?"

"Apparently tampered with," he said slowly.

"Well, what's the schedule?" Shake asked.



Mr. Brewster turned back to the microphone and told Corbin Davis of their decision. As they began to discuss details, Biff looked at Tish.

The Eskimo lad was peering down at the wing in puzzlement. He stooped, looked under the wing, then rose and looked at the top again.

“What’s wrong?” asked Biff, moving to his side.

Tish pointed silently to the wing. There was a neat hole drilled completely through the wing.

“Bullet hole?” asked Biff.

Tish was nodding his head slowly, all the while moving along the ship, searching for any other possible punctures. Then, toward the back of the plane, he stopped again. He poked at another hole there.

“Those two sounds we heard when we were trying to land,” Biff said.

“Somebody was shooting at us,” said Tish grimly.

By this time, Shake had noticed their investigation and hurried over.

He looked at both bullet holes, cocked his head, and closing one eye, said, “These boys tried every way in the book to keep us from getting here with those boxes, I’d say.”

“I don’t understand all this,” Biff said. “What do they expect to gain-whoever they are?”

“Maybe they have some idea down below,” said Shake, heading for the cockpit where Mr. Brewster was still talking to Corbin Davis. “I’ll tell ‘em to check on who was giving us that twenty-one gun salute.”

Biff turned back to Tish, shook his head slowly, and said, “We’re in Alaska just four hours, and already they’ve tried to blow us up, force us down, and shoot us full of holes. Is that what you would call hospitality?”

“I’m just the copilot.” Tish grinned. “You’ll have to file your complaint with the captain.”

“Likely story,” Biff said. He paused, and then added more

seriously, “Have you ever hiked off a glacier?”

“Do it every weekend,” Tish said.

“I’ll bet,” said Biff.

Tish crooked his finger at Biff. “Speaking of hikes, we had better stock up on walking gear.” He led the blond lad around to the opposite side of the plane, opened the storage door, and began handing out equipment.

“A peavy,” he said, handing Biff a long, pointed pole with a hook near the end. “Rope ... package of K rations, flashlight.” Then he dug way in the back of the storage space, hauled out a long, soft leather garment, and tossed it at Biff.

“Parkey,” he said.

Biff knew a parka when he saw one. “How come you call it parkey when it’s spelled p-a-r-k-a?” he asked.

“Same reason you call it Arkansaw when it’s spelled A-r-k-a-n-s-a-s,” Tish said, his head still stuck in the storage space.

Biff pulled on the fur-lined garment, then draped the fur-edged hood over his head.

“What kind of fur is this around the face?” he asked.

“Wolverine,” said Tish. “Only kind your breath won’t frost on.”

“Clever people, these Eskimos,” said Biff.

In a few minutes they were both identically equipped and waiting for the two men to finish their conversation with the mine.

They heard Biff’s dad sign off, then climb slowly out of the pilot’s seat. He and Shake walked back toward the tail of the *Willivaw* where the boys were standing.

“Boys,” said Tom Brewster, “As nearly as Shake can figure out, we’re about four miles from the tip of this glacier. The mine entrance is at ground level out there at the tip.” He pointed toward the west where they could see the wind whipping the soft

powdered snow into small whirls on the surface of the glacier. “You’re to walk in that direction, looking for a place to get off the

glacier and on to the mountainside. Once you're on the mountainside, you walk parallel with the glacier till you reach its tip. When you get there, you will see the mud flats and the mine entrance."

"You talk as if we're not all going together," Biff said.

"We're not," his dad answered. "You and Tish are going off the north side, Shake and I are going off the south. So if one party is uh-delayed, the other party can get there with their two control units and perhaps keep the reactor from failing."

"Good enough," said Biff. "I'm ready."

Shake produced two cord net slings into which they hung their boxes, and when their loads were comfortably adjusted, he slapped each boy on the back.

"Oh," he said, "the mine is sending out two men along each side of the glacier to meet us, so you can be looking for them. Bill Blair and an Indian helper will meet you."

Mr. Brewster reached out to grip Biff's shoulder and said, "I wouldn't ask you to do this, son, but the lives of a lot of men at that mine may depend upon us."

Shake gripped Tish's mittened hand and said brusquely, "Last one there's a rotten egg, huh?"

Tish grinned and saluted.

Then Biff fell into step beside the Eskimo boy, and they started off across the ragged ice. They had taken a few steps when Biff turned to wave good-by, but the rising wind stirred the snow into violent gusts and the two men had disappeared in the haze.

The boys headed toward the rip of the glacial tongue, angling toward the edge of the ice floe so as to find a place where they could leave the glacier and get on to the mountainside.

But what had seemed so simple in theory, turned out to be punishing and exhausting in practice. Time and again they would seem to be making progress toward a spot where they could climb down off the glacial ice, only to be diverted by a wide crevasse that barred their way and caused them to detour back toward the center of the glacier. The wind was whistling down the steep slopes of the mountains now, and though the clouds were being swept away, the

fine glacial snow billowed about them like a desert dust storm.

Tish would advance through the haze probing with his peavy in the surface of the glacier, feeling for hidden crevasses. These camouflaged cracks in the ice were treacherous as elephant traps. Wide seams in the ice would be plugged with soft snow that formed a solid-looking bridge, offering no hint of the deep caverns beneath its thin shell. And when Tish's peavy would pierce the soft snow, a small hole would gape open and then grow to a huge crevasse.

They would hear rumblings as the glacier stirred beneath them, and once Tish said, "Old Lank's turnj ing over in bed."

The wind was getting stronger and stronger, and Biff was thankful for the "parkey" Tish had given him. They had been ducking their heads to keep snow from blowing in their eyes, and they hadn't noticed how thoroughly the mists had been dissipated by the wind.

It was only when Tish looked up and saw blue sky, that they realized what had happened.

"If Shake and your dad haven't gotten too far, they may go back to the plane and fly off," Tish shouted over the howl of the wind.

"Should we go back?" Biff yelled.

Tish shook his head and gave the sign to mush. The glare from the snow on the mountainside was becoming fierce now, and Tish held up his dark glasses to Biff as a signal for the blond boy to put his own on.

Biff realized with a frantic slapping of his pockets that he had left his glasses back in the *Willwaw*. He had laid them down when the mists had risen and forgotten to pick them up again.

Tish handed Biff his glasses, then pointed to his own face and grinned. His round, fat cheeks squeezed his eyes to slits, furnishing him with built-in "blinkers."

Biff shook his head, and when he wouldn't accept the glasses, Tish uncoiled his rope and tied one end around Biff's waist so as to be sure that snow-blindness wouldn't cause Biff to lose sight of Tish walking ahead of him.

Biff had heard of the perils of snow-blindness, and he began to see why people of the North feared it so.

His eyes stung, and the fierce glare began to form a halo about everything. He found himself trying to walk with his eyes closed until he realized how hazardous that was, even though he was tied to Tish.

Biff opened his eyes suddenly after trying to gain some respite from the fierce glare, when he saw something ahead in the haze. Biff blinked to make sure he wasn't seeing things. There it was again! He saw two men standing together on the glacier!

Tish was trudging along, head bent to protect his face from the stinging snow. He evidently had not seen the two figures.

Biff blinked, wanting to be certain this was not a figment of his snow-blindness. But when he looked again, he saw them even more plainly. It was two men, and they were waving toward Biff and Tish.

Biff yanked on the rope and brought Tish up with a start. The Eskimo boy looked back. In the howling wind, Biff could not hear the boy's voice, but he could see his lips form the words, "What is it?"

"Two men!" shouted Biff, trying to form the words distinctly so Tish could read his lips in the gale.

Tish turned to look, shading his eyes, and then Biff saw him begin to shake his head excitedly.

For a second the wind subsided and they could see the men quite clearly now, about fifty yards off and standing right at the edge of the glacier. One was huge, an Indian in a red mackinaw and knitted hat and carrying a rifle. The other was a medium-sized man in a hooded parka.

They stood there waving the boys toward them. , "It must be the two men from the mine!" yelled Biff at the top of his lungs.

But Tish already had started hurrying toward the figures far ahead. Biff was running to keep up and in the glare of the snow, he didn't realize that he was not staying right behind the Eskimo lad.

Biff began to veer off at an angle, confused by his snow-blindness and unable to see through the whirling snow.

He never saw the edge of the precipice that Tish had so expertly avoided. His right foot sank into a crack. As he began to slide, he tried to backpedal, but the cavern loomed at his feet and he was slipping down, down, down... .

## CHAPTER VI Down and Out

BIFF clawed at the air in panic as he felt the ice open up to claim him. He felt something slow his plunge momentarily and realized that the rope around his waist was holding him.

As the crevasse widened with a roar of collapsing ice, he felt the rope loosen and the speed of his plunge picked up again. But in the brief instant the tightened rope had braked his fall, Biff had seen what lay ahead. He was on a sort of ski-slide that ended in a sheer drop down into the crevasse. Straight across from the end of the slide was a ledge protruding from the opposite wall.

Biff let himself go and shot off the end of the slide, projecting himself like a skier and landed bottom down on the shelf which hung out over a deep, black hole.

As the sound of falling ice echoed away far below, all Biff could hear was a strange booming. He realized that it was his blood pounding in his ears, his chest, his wrists. He was shaking in every limb and knew unashamedly that the shaking was from fright.

“Biff! Biff!” From somewhere that seemed miles off, he heard his name being called.

Then, as the pounding in his temples subsided, he knew it wasn’t miles away. The voice was from just a few feet away, and it was Tish.

“Biff! Answer me!”

“Okay,” Biff heard a weak little voice say. He realized the voice was his own. “Okay!” he shouted, and the word echoed against the icy walls of his prison.

“Biff, whatever you do, don’t move,” he heard Tish call. “You’ve pulled me over the edge of this crevasse. Don’t put any pressure on your rope.”

It was only then that Biff realized the rope around his waist was still taut. He probably had dragged Tish right along with him, and now the Eskimo was clinging to something up above him to keep from falling the rest of the way into the crevasse.

Biff lay there, waiting for Tish’s next word.

“Are you hurt?” Tish yelled.

“No-no, I’m okay,” Biff answered.

“How about the box?”

Biff clapped his hand to his back to see if the box was still there in the sling.

“Yes, still there,” he answered.

“Okay-let’s just sit tight,” Tish said from somewhere above him. “Surely those men will come after us.”

They could hear the wind howling as the minutes

ticked by. Sometimes it would sound like human voices nearing them. But the minutes stretched into a quarter hour, then a half hour, and the boys’ conversation died away. They knew the men were not coming.

“They *must* have seen us,” Tish said. “They waved.”

“It must have been the men from the mine,” said Biff. “Who else would be wandering around out here?”

Tish did not answer.

“Tish, can you figure why they didn’t come and rescue us?” Biff asked. Still no answer. “tish!”

“This is Ghost Glacier,” the Eskimo said in a small, hollow voice. “Do you think-” “What?”

“Could that have been Lank Leominister and Aniak, his friend? They used to roam this glacier.” “Ghosts?”

“Yes-don’t laugh, Biff.”

“Don’t worry about me laughing,” Biff moaned, trying to ease the pressure on his arm, which had been cramped in the same position he had held ever since Tish warned him not to put more pressure on the taut rope. “We’re going to have to forget about those men we saw and get out of this ourselves.” He began to ease his arm toward the rope. “Watch it-watch it,” Tish whispered hoarsely. “I’m hanging on by my toes now.”

Inch by inch, Biff slid his arm out from under him. Then slowly he worked his numb fingers toward the rope tied around his waist. He fumbled with the knot that had grown hard as a rock under the pressure of his fall.

But little by little he could feel the rope giving under his insistent picking. Then a strand came loose, the knot gave, and he began to ease it from around his waist.

“Good work-good work!” he heard Tish whisper above him. “Now I may be able to crawl backwards-“

Biff heard the sound of clawing against ice, and soft-powdered snow began to sift down into his prison. He could hear the Eskimo lad inching his way backward toward safety. He had no idea how far down over the edge Tish had been pulled, but he could almost see the nerve-wracking struggle in the heavy sounds of breathing going on above his head.

And then-

“Out! I’m out!” cried Tish’s happy voice.

Biff looked up at the swirling snow about fifteen feet above.

“Do you see anything of those men?” he called.

A slight pause, then, “No-they’re gone!”

Biff took a deep breath. “What do we do now?”

“Biff-can you take your box out of the sling?” Tish asked.

Biff felt around behind his back. “Yes-why?”

“I’m going to toss my rope down; you tie the box on it,” Tish shouted, “and I’ll haul it up.”

Biff waited. He heard the soft swish of rope flying through the air and saw the end of the white strand dangling in front of him. He reached out, tied the sling firmly on to Tish’s rope and then shouted the haul-away signal. He saw the box disappear as Tish hauled it to the surface.

“Now tie your rope to the end of mine,” Tish called. “Good and tight!” Again the rope swished over the edge of the crevasse.



“And don’t waste time,” Tish shouted. “It’s getting dark.”

Biff’s hands shook as he began to knot the two ends of the rope together. Then he untied them and made two loops which he threaded, one through the other.

“Okay, chief-now what?” Biff called.

“Ever done any rope climbing?” Tish asked.

“A little, in school,” Biff answered.

“Good. Now what you have to do is leap back to that ski slope you slid down. Try to slide back up it as far as you can. Then turn and start pulling yourself up on the rope; and when your feet hit the wall above you, start climbing against the tight rope. The rest is easy.”

“Oh, sure,” Biff said.

“Ready?”

Biff felt he was being rushed but realized Tish must be doing it this way to keep him from letting his fears and doubts have time to work on him.

“Okay, go!”

Biff took a deep breath, braced his heels against the icy wall behind him, then leaped across to the icy slope about eight feet away.

He felt his feet hit the edge, then begin to slide. When he stopped sliding, he wheeled and began to climb the taut rope toward the opposite wall. His feet hit the wall and he began to dig frantically toward the light above.

He was up and over the edge so fast that he was being dragged forward on his stomach before he could yell: “Whoa-whoa! I’m up!”

Tish, heels dug into a rut, let the rope go limp and sat down hard on the ice. He put his head between his legs and gasped for breath. Biff slumped to a heap beside him.

After a long minute Biff raised his head and looked off across the glacier. He could still see those men, in his mind’s eye, standing in the swirling snow. He couldn’t believe they had been a figment of his imagination. Besides, Tish had seen them too.

They must have been the men from the mine. But why, he asked himself, had they not come to help?

“We have to be off this glacier before it gets dark,” Tish said, “or we’ll be in real trouble!”

They coiled up their ropes, loaded their boxes on their backs, and with Tish leading, started off across the ice once more.

They had walked about fifteen minutes when the Eskimo raised his hand, pointed ahead, and clenched his fist in a triumphant gesture.

Biff saw it too. It was a gravelly looking bridge between glacier and mountainside. Tish headed for the

spot cautiously, feeling with his peavy for any mush-iness in the gravel surface. But it was firm and hard, and with a triumphant leap, Tish jumped from glacier to rock with Biff following him.

Tish surveyed the rock slope for the best route toward the tip of the glacier and the mine entrance.

The sun was sinking rapidly toward the horizon, but they were soon making excellent progress toward the end of the glacier.

When they stopped to catch their breath for a moment, Tish said, “Shall we try to make the mine before dark or just *siivash* it?”

“Educate me,” Biff said. “What’s *swash*?”

“Sleep out,” said Tish.

“On these rocks?” Biff said. “Thanks a lot, but no thanks. Just mush, old boy.”

Tish laughed and struck off across the rocky ledges and small footholds in the direction of the glacier tip.

They had reached a small, flat place between two large rocks when Tish stopped, held up his hand and said, “Listen!”

Biff stopped in his tracks.

“Did you hear an engine?” Tish asked.

Biff listened. At first, he could hear little save the whistle of the dying wind. Then, in the distance, he did hear an engine.

A minute, then another, and then Tish shouted, "It's the *Williwa'w*! I know the sound."

Sure enough, out over the glacier they saw the yellow ship swoop low and roar past, almost at their level. They waved and whooped, trying to attract Shake's attention; but the plane gave no sign it had seen them.

"I think he had your dad and two others with him," shouted Tish. "I think I saw four faces looking down."

"They're probably looking for us!" Biff exclaimed.

"In the crevasse-sure!" said Tish.

They heard the *Williwaiu* returning. Again it roared by and again.

"They are looking for us," Biff said.

"It's so near dark, he's going to have to get down quick," said Tish. "He can't land on those mud flats in the dark."

Tish was quite right. The *Williwaiu* did not return.

The boys did not feel depressed, however. The sight of the *Williwaw* had given them new strength; and they were just about to resume their precarious journey when Biff noticed something glinting at his feet. He reached down and picked up a spent cartridge case. A foot or so away lay another.

He held them up, one in each hand. "Well, well, well," he said. "Now I wonder who could have left these here?"

Tish stared at them, then looked slowly at Biff. "From the looks, they were shot just today- .30-.30's."

"What would you say made those holes in our wing?"

"I'd say-.30-30's."

"And if we're right it must have been someone who was *expecting* us to arrive in that plane. That would

mean someone at the mine. Come on, mush. I'll bet the mine is close by."

As they walked, the moon began to rise. Its reflection off the icy

glacier made it seem as bright as day. They angled toward the base of the mountain where it met the end of the glacier. Clinging to the sheer rocks, they edged by the end of the great river of ice. When they were about twenty-five feet past the tip of the glacier, they turned and looked back.

The broad face of the huge ice floe rose straight and shining for about seven hundred feet into the air. Its center bulged out onto the mud flats in a great arc that swept from mountain to mountain.

“Look!” said Tish suddenly. There, parked on the mud flats in front of the glacier, stood the *Williwaw* and beside the plane, four men. Shake and Tom Brewster stood close together, and facing them were a medium-sized man in a parka and a huge Indian in a mackinaw and knitted cap.

“Those are the men we saw!” Tish said excitedly.

Biff nodded his head slowly. “Do you feel like Tom Sawyer?” he asked Tish.

“Why, what do you mean?”

“I think we’re watching our own funeral service!”

## CHAPTER VII

### tank’s Place

AS BIFF and Tish scrambled *off* the mountain and on to the mud flats, their feet made crunching sounds on the thin ice coating of the mud.

Biff’s father looked up suddenly, peered across the flats, and shouted, “Biff!” He shouldered his way between the two men who were talking to them and hurried toward his son.

Grabbing Biff in a bear hug, he swept him off his feet. “We were worried about you, boy,” he said huskily. Then he looked at Tish. “But you pulled him through, did you, Tish?”

Tish smiled self-consciously and looked toward Shake, who had left the two men and was running to meet them.

“The wandering Eskimo!” shouted Shake as he trotted up. “I told Blair and Gizmo they shouldn’t have given up on you two!”

Biff was looking toward the two men who were now coming toward them.

The man in the parka was smiling, and the huge Indian whom Shake had called Gizmo was staring at them in disbelief.

The parka-clad man strode forward with his hand outstretched. He threw back his hood, and Biff could see that he was a man with very dark hair and brows and flashing white teeth. This was Bill Blair.

“I told Gizmo it was you we had seen!” Blair said. “But when you disappeared right before our eyes, he believed we had seen the glacier ghost and I couldn’t get him to walk out on that ice floe for love nor money!”

“We saw you, too,” Biff declared. “And for a while we decided *ive* had seen some ghosts!”

They were all beginning to chuckle now.

Gizmo, the Indian, however, stood to one side with an odd look on his face.

“Come on, Gizmo!” said Bill Blair. “They’re for real-come look.”

The big Indian sidled forward, a tentative, brown-toothed grin beginning to crease his dark face.

Biff shook hands with Blair and Gizmo, and his father explained that Blair was the head reactor technician in the mine. He had volunteered to go out with Gizmo to meet the boys since he felt the radiation control units were part of his responsibility.

“Gizmo?” said Tish suddenly. “That’s not a Tlingit name, is it?”

Bill Blair laughed loudly. “Jehosophat, no!” he said. “But we couldn’t pronounce his Indian name so we called him the one that sounds most like it.”

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Gizmo grinned to show he wasn’t offended.

“Well,” sighed Biff, “it sure feels better to be Standing here laughing than to be sitting halfway down one of Lank Leominister’s crevasses!”

“Crevasse!” said Tom Brewster. “Then you did get into trouble out there.”

Biff was about to launch into a report on their adventure when they heard a booming voice that sounded strangely familiar.

“So they *did* get through,” the voice bellowed.

Biff and Tish looked toward the glacier and saw, coming out of a small entrance drilled into the base of the ice cliff, a burly man in mining khakis, boots, and a bright, peaked cap.

“Oh, oh,” grinned Bill Blair. “Corbin Davis, our top-kick. You’d better save your story, otherwise you’ll just have to tell it all over again for him.”

The large man looked just like his blustery voice. He was red-cheeked and his gray hair sprouted like porcupine quills. His eyebrows were heavy and tangled. His great, gray eyes were as guileless as a child’s.

And though he had never laid eyes on Biff or Tish before, he swept them into his arms and boomed, “Your dad was sure you’d make it! And he bet me there wouldn’t be a scratch on those control boxes!” He swung Biff around to look at his box. “*Is there?*” He peered closely at the cargo, then bellowed, “Say, here’s a skinned place that looks like you dropped the box off a cliff!”

“You’re getting warm, sir!” Biff said, smiling.

“Well, look here,” boomed the burly mine boss.

“We’d better get these units inside and check them.”

“Don’t you want to hear what happened to the boys, Corbin?” Bill Blair smiled.

“Yes, yes, of course,” said the gray-haired man. “But first let’s get out of this cold wind and into that warm ice floe.”

The burly man laughed loudly at his small joke. “Come along,” he said.

“I’ll tie the *Williivaiv* down for the night,” said Shake.

As the others started toward the opening at the base of the cliff, Biff looked at Gizmo and said, “Didn’t you forget your rifle?”

Gizmo stopped short, looked at Bill Blair, and spread his hands wide. "No rifle," he said.

Biff glanced at Tish, then at Gizmo again.

"I could have sworn I saw you carrying a .30-.30 out there on the glacier," he said.

"No rifle," the Indian repeated.

"I guess I'm seeing things everywhere today," Biff said, glancing again at the Eskimo.

Biff could see the whole broad face of Ghost Glacier now. From this angle, he could see that it was rutted and seamed, like the face of a very old man. It was an inspiring sight. But the mine entrance was definitely not in the same category. A single bulb lit the small entrance, and a few boards were strewn in front of the opening as protection from the mud.

As they stepped into the entrance, they saw a long, dimly lit tunnel cutting straight back into the glacier. The scant light came from naked light bulbs hung

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every twenty feet from an electric cord strung along the bare ice walls of the tunnel.

The tunnel floor was covered with boards, and as they looked out along its great length, they could see where the ice had buckled and heaved, giving a roller-coaster look to the floor.

The icy corridor seemed to rise slowly as it headed back into the ice pack, and about a hundred yards ahead, it curved and disappeared into the deeper recesses of the glacier.

They piled on to an electric vehicle with three bench seats which apparently was used for transportation within the mine. Then, with Corbin Davis at the wheel, they whirled off down the undulating tunnel.

When the mine buggy sped around a curve in the tunnel, they saw a brightly lighted intersection ahead. It was a broad, paneled tunnel and as the vehicle entered it, they could see that this must be the main mine artery. For all practical purposes, this might have been

a corridor in a New York City office building. The ceiling and walls were covered in aluminum siding and the floor with asphalt tile. Heating panels in the walls glowed dully, and there were fluorescent lights in the ceiling.

Doors on each side of the corridor indicated the presence of offices, living quarters, cafeteria, and library. A sign on one door read *Automation*, on another, *Decontamination*.

Straight ahead, and immediately across from where they had bisected this corridor, were double doors

which said: *To Mine*. Here, in this completely insulated section, there was no hint of ice in sight.

At one end of the paneled corridor, and isolated from the rest of the offices, was a door and a sign reading *Cooling Shaft*. At the opposite end, another door and sign reading *Reactor*.

Corbin Davis, Tom Brewster, and Bill Blair piled out of the mine buggy and after instructing some Indian laborers to remove the control unit boxes, they headed for the reactor room.

“This I’ve got to see,” said Tish.

Corbin Davis swung the big door open, and they saw it-the largest room either boy had ever seen in his life. The ceiling was of sheer blue ice whose high center curved in a gentle arch for one hundred feet in each direction. There were no pillars to support the great, sweeping dome that twinkled with a million dancing stars from the electric lights below.

And there, squarely in the middle of the sparkling room, was the atomic reactor.

Tish gave a long, low whistle. The boy who had seen Mt. McKinley, Alaska’s fabulous mountain; who had gazed at the longest chain of volcanoes in the world just a couple of hundred miles from where they were standing-this Eskimo who lived in a state where spectacles of nature were commonplace, was finally halted in his tracks by a sample of the work of man.

“Oh, just a simple old steam generator,” said Biff in simulated boredom for he had seen a reactor before and was trying to act as nonchalant about this as



Tish had been about all the wonders of Alaska.

"Just a steam generator?" marveled Tish. "Why, what are you talking about?"

"Well, technically that's all it is," Biff said. "The heat formed by the fission in the reactor cells makes steam and the steam is used to run engines-that's all"

"But why did they bring an atomic reactor in just for that?" asked Tish.

"I guess because it's the most efficient way to generate power so far from coal and oil supplies."

Tish gave the reactor a long look and shook his head in amazement.

The boys joined Biff's father, Corbin Davis, and Bill Blair, who were standing before a welter of dials and gauges at the base of the reactor.

"I have a feeling," said Davis, glancing at the boys, "that now we have the radiation control units, our troubles are going to stop."

"Yep," murmured Tish, "our troubles are probably going to stop if *he* wants them to." The Eskimo nodded toward the ice wall.

"If *who* wants them to?" asked Biff.

Tish jerked his thumb toward the ice wall. "Lank," he said. "Fella that owns the place."

Biff waited for Tish to grin, but the Eskimo looked as serious as could be.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Misery Loves Company

AS THE days sped by, Davis's prediction seemed to be coming true. With the new radiation control units installed, troubles at the mine seemed to have come to a halt. The complicated work of probing through the glacier ice in search of the main deposit of Moon Ore went on without a hitch, and Tom Brewster had the mine crew

working with a new efficiency.

At supper one night Biff heard his father and Cor-bin Davis agree that whatever plot might have been afoot to wreck the mine apparently had died when the plotters failed to prevent the radiation control units from reaching the mine.

The boys were delighted by the ice-cutting machine which they dubbed the "Mighty Mole." The machine sliced blocks of ice from the glacier and placed them on an endless chain which carried them through a tunnel to the Copper River where they were dumped into the water and carried away on the current.

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The mine scientists used a thermal drill to probe the glacial ice for the main ore deposit they sought. This was a hot drill which cut the ice like butter and brought up ore samplings from the earth beneath the glacier.

The extensive electrical circuits, plumbing, heating, and ventilation facilities for the mine were controlled by automation. Only a panel of blinking lights indicated the presence of the great network of thermostats, mercury switches, and transistors hard at work keeping the amazing beehive functioning.

The cooling shaft, they discovered, was a hundred-foot well drilled in the floor of the glacial ice. At the bottom rested the fissionable cells that made the reactor work. The cells were in metal cylinders suspended in a tank which rested in a glacial stream running beneath the ice floe. The heat from these cells was carried to the steam generator which provided energy to run all of the facilities at the mine. The cells were placed at this depth, the boys learned, not only to cool them but to isolate the spurious radiation which could be harmful to the people in the mine.

But what amused Biff was that out of all the wonders in the mine, it was not the reactor or the thermal drill or the miracles of automation that most impressed Tish.

Tish loved the hot showers!

The mine's water supply was drawn from a well drilled in the glacier floor at a point far removed from the cooling shaft. The well did not tap the

glacial stream used to cool the reactor elements. This might have resulted in accidental radioactive contamination of the water supply. Instead, the well stopped about fifty feet deep in the ice. At that level, hot coils melted the ice and the water was piped to the surface.

Whenever there came a pause in the day's activities that would normally be considered a coffee break, Tish wanted to take a hot shower!

They were splashing around in the shower one morning when Biff informed the happy Eskimo that they had probably taken more baths in hundred-year-old water than anyone in history.

Tish filled his palm full and looked at the water.

"By golly, you're right," said the boy. "The snow that made this water could have fallen back about the time of the Civil War."

"Or even the Revolutionary War," Biff said.

"This is a big old glacier," Tish said. "We may be washing in snow that fell the year my ancestors made the jump from Asia to Alaska!"

"How's that?" said Biff, puzzled by the remark.

"All the original tribes in Alaska migrated from Asia," said Tish. "Up there at the western edge of Alaska you can look across the Bering Strait and *see* Russia. They say that thousands of years ago there used to be a land connection so folks could walk across."

"And you say that all the Eskimos and Indians in Alaska originated there?" said Biff.

"And all the Indians in North America, I think,"

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Tish added. "They just filtered on down, drifting farther and farther south, breaking off into different groups that became tribes, and after a few more thousand years they filled two continents, all the way to the tip of South America."

"Then why did your dopey ancestors stay up here where things are frozen all the time?" laughed Biff, splashing water at the Eskimo boy.

"What do you mean frozen all the time?" shouted Tish. "Are you

one of these characters who think Alaska is just one big iceberg?”

“Well, I haven’t seen anything to change my mind,” said Biff.

“If we went outside of this cozy glacier, you might see things that’d surprise you!” Tish said.

“Well, what are we waiting for?” Biff laughed, heading for a towel. “Let’s go look ‘er over!”

Tish took one more happy splash, then put on his clothes. He explained that he had to help Shake unload the day’s shipment of mine supplies. If Biff wasn’t needed to help his dad at the mine, Tish suggested, why didn’t they hop in to Cordova with Shake and have a real look at Alaska?

“Sounds great,” Biff said. “Be with you as soon as I can.”

He went to his father, who was at work with the thermal drill, and asked how the search for the main ore deposit was progressing.

“Quite slowly, son,” said Mr. Brewster. “Mr. Lank Leominister’s notes continue to lead us up a lot of blind alleys.”

Biff thought for a moment. “Dad, you said a few days ago that you thought some of Lank’s notes might be missing. Has anyone ever searched for them?”

Tom Brewster looked up from where he was helping the group of Indian laborers add another section to the long drill. “Where would we look?” he said, smiling. “Do you know how big this Alaska is?”

“I was just getting ready to find out,” Biff said. “That is, if you have nothing pressing for me to do for a while.”

“No, go ahead,” his father said. “I want you to see more of this state.”

Biff thanked his father and headed out the mine tunnel toward the mud flats where he knew Shake and Tish would be finishing the unloading of supplies.

Biff knew from hearing Shake and Tish talk, that they had served many such isolated mining outposts in this part of Alaska. All over the state, bush pilots just like Shake were flying daily supply routes that would cause an international jet pilot to quake.

But in this rugged Alaska terrain, with its great distances and severe weather, the small airplane and the lone pilot were the only practical way to keep these outposts in contact with the world.

Biff had noticed that whenever Shake was in the air he was constantly watching the ground below. As the bush pilot explained, when they took off a few minutes later, “You’ve got to know where you *can* go if you have to put down.”

Tish saw an opening and said, “Shake, why don’t we show him our favorite emergency field?”

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“Little Smokey?” Shake said.

, “Yes,” Tish said. “Biff’s a guy that thinks Alaska is one big iceberg. That’ll show him.”

Shake looked at his watch. “Well, we’re kind of pinched for rime, but we can take a look at it.” He banked the plane toward the east, and Tish looked at Biff with a wide grin.

“We call it our favorite emergency strip, but we’ve never had an emergency so we could land there, dern it.”

“Why do you say that?” Biff asked.

“You’ll see.” Tish grinned.

The *Williivaw* flew east for about fifteen minutes, and as Shake began to ease back on the throttle and the plane began to lose altitude, Biff could see that they were near the head of Ghost Glacier.

The glacier started in a spectacularly high valley between two ridges of the mountain range. And running parallel with it, Biff noticed, was a very short, much shallower valley.

But in the small valley there was no ice. And as they flew lower he could see that, though there was some snow beneath the great spruce trees that covered most of the surface there, the open spaces showed faint tinges of grassy green.

“Looks like spring’s coming quicker down there than it is anywhere else, doesn’t it?” said Shake with a wink at Tish.

Biff kept staring at the greenness of the valley which contrasted so

sharply with the desolate mountain crags and the endless stretches of glacial ice that

dominated the rest of the terrain as far as the eye could see.

“Say, what’s that?” he asked suddenly, pointing at a sudden puff of gray cloudiness which began to rise from one end of the valley.

“Let’s go down and see,” Shake said, shoving the wheel forward.

They spiraled closer and closer to the valley, and as they dropped to within a few hundred feet of the little oasis, the gray cloud puffed forth again.

This time Biff identified it. “Why that’s steam!” he shouted. “Coming right out of the ground!”

Tish crossed his arms with a self-satisfied smirk.

“One big iceberg, huh?” he said.

Biff had never dreamed that Alaska had hot springs, but here lay one in the midst of a sea of ice!

“That’s probably what keeps the grass green down there,” Biff suggested.

“Probably,” said Shake. “Now look down at the other end of the valley,” he added, nosing the plane in that direction.

Biff peered over the tops of the great spruce trees which dominated the south end of the valley. From the rock wall which hemmed in the small canyon, Biff could see water sparkling. And as they drew closer, he realized it was a great waterfall. Then his eye followed the sparkle of water winding through the spruce forest and around rocks and boulders which littered the floor of the valley.

“We’ve always thought we’d like to catch a fish in

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that glacier stream and cook it in that hot spring,” Tish said.

“How come you’ve never done it?” Biff said.

“Oh, we’re kind of saving that valley,” Shake said. “Some day we may want to take a long vacation, and that looks like the perfect

spot.”

Biff cast a longing look at the cozy little valley. Then a thought came to him.

“Say, didn’t Lank Leominister live around here somewhere?” he said. “Maybe this was his valley.”

“I’ve thought about that,” Shake said quietly. “But to me it would be like desecrating a grave to go nosing around in a place as pretty as that.” He looked down at the glacier where they knew Lank had been lost. “Besides, I’m not taking any chances on fooling with ghosts.”

“Okay, the tour’s over for today,” said Tish, trying to break the doleful trend of the conversation. “I say we ought to give him a real Alaskan treat.”

“What’s that?” Biff asked, still looking back at the valley behind them.

“Misery McDonald’s sourdough pancakes!” Tish said. “You haven’t lived till you’ve eaten a stack.”

Biff had heard both Shake and Tish quote the fabulous Misery McDonald, the old-time gold miner who now ran a restaurant in Cordova.

“I’m going to beg off,” said Shake, “but you two can go if you want to.”

“Pour on the coal then,” Tish said. “I’m hungry.”

Misery’s restaurant was only a short distance from

Cordova airport, and Biff knew that Shake and Tish took most of their meals there.

Biff knew that Tish was not Shake’s son and that there must be quite a story behind the bush pilot’s adoption of the Eskimo boy, but he thought he would wait for Tish to tell him the facts rather than ask any questions that might be resented.

Tish was rubbing his hands together ecstatically as they pushed open the door of Misery’s place.

“Boy, I could eat sourdough pancakes three times a day,” he was saying. “Especially Misery’s.”

Misery's place was small, with a long counter, a row of stools, and booths against one wall. Its windows were permanently steamed, and the air was permeated with the warm aroma of coffee and a strange, pungent tang which Biff had never smelled before.

"Sourdough!" sighed Tish, breathing deeply.

At the far end of the counter an old man in long undershirt, walrus mustache, high-top shoes with floppy laces, rested one elbow on the counter and supported his very sad countenance with one wrinkled old paw.

"Misery," said Tish, nodding toward the proprietor.

Biff was about to give the fabulous old character the once-over, when his attention was suddenly drawn to a tall figure who had just risen from one of the booths and was standing at the counter in front of the cash register.

Biff's heart leaped, and he grabbed Tish's arm.

The man was tall, almost gaunt. He wore a fur hat

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and tailored coat with fur collar. He was smoking a cigarette and as the smoke curled around his distinctively slanted shoulders, Biff was certain it could be only one man, the elegant saboteur from Anchorage!

## CHAPTER IX

### Double Confusion

THE man's back was turned to Biff, and the boy knew he would have surprise on his side.

"Stand by, Tish," Biff muttered and strode toward the front of the restaurant.

The smell of the exotic tobacco in the brown-paper cigarette was wafted to Biff's nostrils as he moved up behind the man and placed his hand on the well-tailored arm.

"We meet again," said Biff softly.

The tall man turned in surprise, but his surprise did not match



Biff's. He had no Van Dyke beard, no dark glasses, and when he whipped off his hat as though to show deference to a friend, Biff could see that his hair was not black and stringy, but short-cropped and blond.

"I-I beg your pardon," Biff stammered in extreme confusion. "I thought I knew you."

"Perfectly all right," said the man in flat, reedy tones. "No harm done."

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Biff backed off, mumbling apologies-unable to believe that his eyes had deceived him. But it was obvious they had. This was not the saboteur who had put the time bomb in their box at Anchorage.

The tall figure paid his check and walked calmly out the door; and through the haze covering the restaurant window Biff could see him adjust his coat collar and stroll nonchalantly away up the street.

"What was that all about?" asked the open-mouthed Tish when Biff returned to the counter.

"You mean that fellow didn't look familiar to you?" Biff said, still staring toward the place where the man had stood.

"That lanky blond fellow?" Tish said. "No, I don't think I ever saw him before in my life."

Biff shook his head slowly. "Well, maybe it's me," he mumbled. "I never have been convinced our troubles at the mine were over, and I guess anything that reminds me of them gets me jumpy."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Tish said. "I think what you need is a big stack of Mis-"

"-Misery's sourdough pancakes. I know," Biff finished for him. "Okay, let's order."

"Two short stacks, Misery," Tish called to the man at the end of the counter.

The old man heaved himself to his feet and looked dolefully toward the two boys.

"You may be sorry," he croaked. "Batter doesn't seem too good

today.”

Tish winked at Biff. “Nothing is ever too good, according to Misery.”

Biff was the first to admit that Misery McDonald was quite wrong about his pancakes. They were delicious. Instead of maple syrup, they were given jars of Alaskan strawberry syrup and with pats of fresh butter the taste, Biff decided, was superb.

No matter how much he tried to forget his experience with the tall man, Biff could not do it. His mind kept returning to the strange similarity in appearance. He glanced over at Misery, noting that the old man was watching them from the corner of his eye as though expecting some comment on the hot-cakes.

Biff leaned over and whispered to Tish, “Say, I wonder if Misery would know who that tall fellow was?”

Tish’s mouth was full, but he muttered, “Sure, he doesn’t miss a thing. Ask him.” Tish put his hand on Biff’s arm. “But not right out. These old timers don’t like nosey questions about other folks.”

“Let’s see,” Biff murmured. “He’d probably know how Moon Ore got its name. I’ll ask him that.”

“Compliment him on his hotcakes.” Tish said, scooping up another forkful of pancakes and dripping syrup. “That’ll do it.”

Biff turned on a big smile. “These are certainly delicious pancakes,” he exclaimed, looking toward the old man.

Misery came to life immediately. He rose from his seat in apparent boredom, but he strolled over where the boys were sitting. “They were lots better yesterday, laddie,” he said in a soft burr.

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“I’d like to have the recipe to take home to my mom in Indiana,” Biff said.

“The receipt would be no good to yuh,” Misery said with a wink. “Got to have some of my sourdough for seed.”

Biff looked puzzled.

“They start every batch of pancakes with a little of the sourdough

left over from the last batch,” Tish explained.

“Ay, lad,” said Misery. “It started in ‘98 when we couldna get yeast to make the dough rise. We just learned to let some dough ferment and use that. Works as good, tastes better.”

“Let me see,” Tish said, a mischievous glint in his eye. “When did you say you started the original batch of dough you used in these hotcakes?”

“1912,” Misery said calmly. “Started it in a bakin’ powder can on the way to the Yukon and just kept addin’ to it.”

Biff saw his chance. “Did you ever run across any Moon Ore in your travels, Misery?” he asked.

“Not in *my* travels,” Misery said. “Although I might as well have been looking for Moon Ore considering the little gold I ever found.”

“How in the world did the stuff ever get the name, Moon Ore?” Biff asked.

“From the Tlingit Indians. They’ve talked about the stuff for centuries. It was supposed to make the whole top of the mountain light up like the moon,” Misery said derisively.

“Which mountain?” Biff asked excitedly.

“Ah, that was the rub,” said Misery. “The Tlingits never could get their stories straight on that. First it was here, then it was there, and whenever anybody went lookin’, it wasn’t anywhere at all.”

“An ore that made the mountain shine,” said Biff softly. “Well, if the sun hit a strongly radioactive ore, the mountain might glow for a while after the sun went down.”

“Ay, if there ever was such a mountain, laddie,” said Misery. “My theory always was that the Tlingits made up the tale so as to get gullible white sourdoughs to hire them to search for the stuff.”

“But didn’t Lank Leominister finally find the Moon Ore? “Biff asked.

“He found one chunk that I know of,” said Misery.

“You mean you know about that chunk?” Biff said.

“Well, I ought to.” The old man coughed, as something in his corn-cob pipe disagreed with him.

Biff waited for him to go on.

“I was the one that sent the chunk of ore to Washington,” said Misery.

Biff was astonished, and so was Tish. “I don’t understand,” said Biff.

“I’m one of the few white men around that speaks the Tlingit language,” said Misery McDonald. “Fifteen years ago, some prospectors found Lank Leomin-ister’s Indian friend, Aniak, wandering around out near that glacier. He was out of his head and raving about Lank being gobbled up by the crevasse. When

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they brought the Indian in, he was clutching this black rock in his hand and he wouldn’t let it go. The Indians around here were afraid to talk to him, so the hospital called me because I spoke Tlingit. But I never did get much out of him-except that black rock. I took that home with me.”

“Was that Moon Ore?” Biff asked.

“Ay, but I didn’t find that out till later-a long time later. I put that rock in a drawer with a roll of picture film, and it exposed the film. When I saw that, I knew there was something odd about that stuff and I sent it on to Washington, explaining where I had gotten it. A year later, a whole planeload of scientists from Washington showed up asking me the way to Ghost Glacier.”

“Why, then you deserve as much credit as Lank Leominister for this mine,” Biff exclaimed.

“Credit for what?” snorted Misery. “What have they found out there, I ask yuh?”

“That’s why they brought Biff’s dad down from Indiana,” Tish said to Misery.

“Ay, I knew when they sent for him,” Misery said.

Biff was astonished.

“The Alaska grapevine,” Misery said.

“Oh, by the way,” Biff said. “That tall, blond man that I ran into a few minutes ago-do you know him?”

“No, but I think some of your men from the mine do.” said Misery. “He sat here talking to your big boss for a couple of hours yesterday.”

“Corbin Davis?” Biff asked.

“That’s the one,” said Misery.

Tish was wiping his mouth and rising to his feet. “We’d better head back to the airport,” he said. “Shake will be waiting for us.”

Biff was still tussling with the problem of the thin man and his surprise connection with Corbin Davis. As he followed Tish out the door and up the street toward the airport, he was only half listening to the Eskimo’s rapid travelogue concerning the sights of Cordova.

Tish was pointing out the Red Dragon Library-a holdover from Gold Rush days, when the building had been a combination church and gambling saloon. The town had just never bothered to change the name when it was converted to a library.

They passed the waterfront, and Tish pointed to the fishermen repairing their nets along the wharves, evidence he said, that spring was really coming.

But they soon left any signs of spring behind. The moment they were in the *Willivaw* and on their way back to Ghost Glacier they had returned to a land of mountains, glaciers, and small, spruce-filled valleys.

Tish pointed to a great mass of winding ice, far off toward the southwest. “Columbia Glacier-biggest in Alaska. You could put Indianapolis on top of that and have enough room left over for Washington, D.C.”

“You talk more like a Texan every day,” Biff said.

“Alaska’s the biggest state now, not Texas,” Tish said proudly.

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“Ay, laddie,” said Biff, imitating Misery’s Scotch burr, “but just

wait till it melts!”

“He got you that time,” Shake laughed, slapping Tish on the back.

Tish was at the controls, and Shake let him land the plane on the flats. The Eskimo “greased” the ship in smoothly, and as they taxied toward the mine entrance, Shake said, “Flats are getting narrower; mud’s getting stickier, and spring’s on the way.”

Biff shivered as he opened the door and stepped out on the icy surface.

“This is spring?” he laughed. “How can you tell?”

“Oh, there are ways,” Shake said. “I’ll bet the glacier ice sounds different these days.”

The boys had noticed how the glacier “rang,” and as they strolled through the entrance and into the tunnel, they could hear the ice peeling quite plainly.

Tish asked Shake if it was okay for him to stay with Biff that night, and the bush pilot gave his permission.

“He wants to mooch another shower,” Biff teased.

“No, it’s just more restful here,” Tish said. “Love those glacier bells.”

They did sound like bells too, the great sounds from within the glacier ice. They played in all keys and in many volumes. There were tones that swelled like booming surf and faded as the sound waves rolled away into the depths of the glacier.

The boys referred to the bells as Lank’s bells. And they judged his moods by the tempo of the ghostly chimes. It was an eerie feeling to lie in bed in the morning and listen to the chimes tinkling away, and

they began to call the sounds their Alaskan alarm clock. They knew, of course, that the sounds were caused by the expansion and contraction of the great ice mass, but they never referred to this but always to Lank’s chimes, and whether he was sad or mad or happy. It was quite a joke in the mine and even Biff’s father would speak of the sounds.

The joke ended that night, however.

The boys had checked with Mr. Brewster and found there was nothing they were needed for, since Tom Brewster was involved in a new probe for the elusive Moon Ore and too busy to spend much time with the boys.

After supper, they turned in, and both boys were soon asleep.

Biff had been snoozing about two or three hours, when he was awakened by a hand on his shoulder, gently shaking him. He started to mumble a sleepy answer and felt Tish's hand slip over his mouth.

"What is it, Tish?" Biff whispered.

Tish's eyes were wide and dark with alarm. His mouth opened to speak, but for a moment no words came forth. Then he stared at Biff and in a thin croak said, "The Ghost-Biff, I hear the Glacier Ghost!"

## CHAPTER X

### Deep Frozen Figment

AT FIRST, Biff started to laugh. "Ghosts!" he snorted. "Oh, come on." But he saw immediately that Tish was not joking. He was shaking.

"Listen-I'm not crazy," the Eskimo whispered. "Listen-you can hear somebody talking-way back there in the glacier."

Biff sat quietly. For a moment he heard nothing, then he heard a low, hollow voice coming from somewhere deep in the glacier. It seemed without direction, impossible to place as to distance. The words were smokelike-unformed and just escaping understanding-at times just wisps of words.

Biff's feet hit the floor and he ran to the wall of his room and pressed his ear against one of the panels and listened. The words seemed more muffled than ever, so Biff tried another wall, then another. On the third attempt, he signaled excitedly for Tish to join him.

Then together, they held their breath and strained

every nerve to make out the words of this ethereal voice drifting to them from within the glacier. Slowly it took form.

Slow, measured tones-spoken in English, not sentences-they

couldn't make out sentences, but one word was "*there.*" "*Buried*" was another word, then "*search*" and "*lost.*" And it all mingled with the glacier chimes playing their ghostly counterpoint.

Then, amazingly, there came an answering voice. A guttural voice, speaking a strange tongue. Speaking the Tlingit Indian tongue.

Biff had heard the Indians in the mine and Tish speak enough of it to recognize the language. But Tish shook his head, indicating he couldn't make out what the Tlingit voice was saying.

And then-so clear as to be just a few feet away- at a moment when the glacier chimes had stilled for just an instant, they heard the words, "*The Lodge Where Moon Hides.*" A pause and then-"*Aniak-Aniak-Aniak.*" The words merged with the booming of the glacier bells, and they heard no more.

Slowly, the boys straightened, staring into each other's eyes.

"It's impossible," Biff whispered. "There must be an explanation."

"There is," Tish said. "Lank Leominister had that Tlingit Indian friend, remember?"

"Misery said his name was Aniak," gasped Biff.

"They spent years together, wandering all around- all over this glacier," Tish whispered.

"And you think we heard-?"

DEEP FROZEN FIGMENT 83

"The two of them talking?" Tish finished for him. · Biff stood transfixed for a moment, chilled to immobility by the very eeriness of the idea. Then he slapped his hand against the wall and blurted, "What are we talking about? Look, there's an explanation for this-a good, logical explanation."

"You city people!" Tish exploded. "Why does there have to be a good, logical explanation for everything?"

"There's got to be a good logical explanation for those *voices* because there are just no such things as ghosts," Biff answered.

"Tell that to those haunts we just heard," Tish snapped.



Biff slapped his Eskimo pal on the shoulder. "Oh, come on, let's figure this thing out together, Tish." He led the Eskimo to his bed, then flopped on his own and said, "Now that phrase we heard-"The Lodge Where Moon Hides"-does that mean anything to you?"

Tish shook his head silently.

"And you couldn't make out the Tlingit words?"

Tish shook his head again.

"Come on, snap out of it, Tish," Biff kidded. "I tell you there's something funny about this. Those voices were real, not spirits."

"Oh, you'd make a big hit with my Indian ancestors," Tish said. "Don't you know us redskins set great store by spirits?"

"Where do you get that redskin stuff?" Biff asked in some surprise. "I thought you were Eskimo."

"Half," said Tish. Then he added, "I think-"

"What do you mean?" Biff asked.

"The other half is Tlingit Indian, I believe. At least that's what Shake thinks. He found me out in the bush when I was a baby. He saw a cabin burning while he was out over the bush one day. He landed too late to save the woman, but I was out in the yard of the cabin where she probably had carried me. Shake said it looked like a Tlingit trapper's cabin, but the woman was Eskimo."

"Is it unusual for Eskimos and Tlingits to marry?" Biff asked.

"A little," Tish said. "Most Eskimos are farther north, the Tlingits are from around here, south-east and south-central Alaska."

"Some story," Biff said.

"Yes," Tish answered. "I think about it a lot. Shake left a grave and a note at the cabin, saying he had taken me. He thought when the trapper came back to the cabin he would hear from him. But that was fifteen years ago, and he's never heard a word."

"And the name Tish? Where did that come from?" Biff asked.

"That's the way I said Thomas when I was growing up." The dark-headed boy smiled. "Thomas is Shake's name, and he said since he

probably would never use it again, I could have it.”

“Well, maybe some day you’ll find out who your folks were,” Biff said. “But meanwhile we’ve got to do some thinking about those wall spirits!”

Tish lay back on the bed and sighed. “Let’s do it in

DEEP FROZEN FIGMENT 85

the morning,” he said. “Right now I want to sleep.”

Biff lay back, pulled up the covers and lay for fully an hour, twisting and turning, grappling with the problem of the strange voices and any possible connection the “spirits” might have with the plot against the mine.

Suddenly, the spirits began to smell like bacon- and eggs-and coffee. Strange things, dreams, Biff thought, realizing he was suspended somewhere between sleep and wakefulness.

And then as his eyes popped open, bacon, eggs, steaming coffee on a platter appeared right under his nose. And the voice of Tish, leaning over his bed, was saying, “Big spirit hunter needum Eggs Benedict withum side order bacon?”

“Red brother hitum nail on skull,” shouted Biff, jumping out of bed and grabbing the tray. He took a big swig of orange juice and said, “How long have you been up?”

“Quite a while,” Tish said soberly.

“Why didn’t you wake me?”

“I wanted to think the ghost thing out my way- like you were doing for about two hours after we went back to bed.”

“Why, I hardly gave it a moment’s thought after we turned off the light,” Biff said, grinning.

“Owl blubber!” Tish snorted. “I heard you tossing and turning until I fell asleep.”

“Spy!” retorted Biff. He took a deep draught of coffee, then looked at Tish and said, “Okay, what do you think?”

“I think we ought to do some spirit-snooping tonight,” Tish said.

“And see if we can hear those voices anywhere *else* in the mine.”

“What would that prove?”

“Ghosts are everywhere, aren’t they? I think the word is omnipresent.”

“Who told you?” asked Biff.

“The dictionary. I just looked it up.”

“Okay, so if we don’t hear them everywhere-?”

“Then they can’t be ghosts. And we operate from there. We go to where they *are* and try to get *to* them.”

The sheer simplicity of the plan was inescapable. So tonight they would go spirit-searching.

“The only time I’ll ever go hunting when I hope I don’t find anything!” Tish said.

Just as Tish had hoped, their hunting gained them nothing. They listened in every part of the mine, but still could not locate the voices again.

The next two nights were just as fruitless. They even started to become a little bored with the search and began making jokes about the glacier bells being a little off key.

On the fourth night they stood with their ears to the walls of one of the newer chambers just excavated to serve as an operating center for the thermal drill. From here the mine technicians would be making a vertical probe straight down into the earth.

As they stood there listening for sounds in the ice, Kim Lindsay, one of the mine technicians, happened upon them and asked what they were doing.

DEEP FROZEN FIGMENT 87

Each one started a sheepish explanation-both, unfortunately, different from the other.

“Oh, just listening to the ice ringing,” laughed Biff.

“An old Eskimo game-to see who can stand the cold on his ear the

longest,” said Tish.

The technician gave them a long, disgusted look that seemed to ask what such characters were doing in an important place and stomped off.

The boys hurried back to their room in embarrassment, deciding to call the witch hunt off for the night. They sprawled on their beds for quite a while, reading and talking. Occasionally one or the other would imagine he heard something stirring within the ice, but each time it proved to be a false alarm.

Then, just as they were about to fall asleep, came the sound that wasn't a false alarm.

A tap-tap-from somewhere within the ice.

Both boys sat straight up in bed.

Tap-tap, tap-clink.

The clink did it for Tish. “Sounds like a prospector’s pick-axe,” he whispered. “Just like Lank Leominister used to carry.”

Biff rose from the bed and listened first at one wall, then another. Nowhere did he seem to hear an increase in the volume of the sound except at the north wall.

“Let’s go,” he whispered to Tish, grabbing his flashlight as he slipped into his clothes and made for the door. They went out into the dim corridor looking both ways, but nobody was there. Biff’s watch said midnight.

“Great hour for a ghost hunt,” he whispered, holding up the dial for Tish to see. They tiptoed down the corridor, stopping every so often to listen. But there was no sound. Then, as they were drawing closer to the door of the cooling shaft, they began to hear noise again, more metallic now. Biff’s heart leaped in his chest, and he felt Tish grip his arm tightly. They crept closer to the door of the cooling shaft, and the sounds increased. Biff nodded toward the door, indicating that behind it lay the source of the strange noise.

The flashlight dropped from Tish’s nervous fingers with a clack!

Biff jumped as Tish clapped his hand to his head in chagrin.

They held their breath, trying to hear above the thunder of their excited hearts.

The sounds had stopped.

They waited ... a minute, two minutes. The sounds did not resume.

“We’re going in,” Biff said.

Tish nodded and tensed himself to follow Biff through the door toward those ghostly sounds.

With a sudden jerk, Biff pushed the door open. The huge ice chamber was dark but not empty!

“Biff-look!”

Tish was pointing to the icy wall of the great room.

There, floating through the ice and bathed in a soft glow, was a diaphanous form—a form that seemed suspended, yet drifting along within the ice itself.

“The Glacier Ghost!”

## CHAPTER XI

### Sticky-Fingered Ghost

BIFF suddenly wanted light. Lots of light. He reached for the wall switch and flipped it on. Lights blazed in the huge chamber, revealing the cooling shaft, ropes swinging lightly from the winch used to lower maintenance workers into the shaft.

And all was quiet.

Tish saw none of these things, however. His eyes were riveted on the ice wall. With the sudden glare of ceiling light, he blinked and held his hand up to shade his eyes. Then he reached up and snapped off the lights.

The apparition had vanished!

The boys looked at each other, hardly breathing.

“Well, now what do you think?” Tish asked.

“I think I’m scared.”

“Amen. Let’s go back to the room and hide under the bed.”

“It’s a deal.”

The two boys hurried to the door and scampered up

the corridor toward their room. They had gone about fifty feet when Biff grabbed Tish’s arm to stop him.

“Look,” he whispered. “The door of Mr. Davis’ office!”

There was an eerie, flickering light showing dimly through the glass. A flash, then darkness-a flash, then more darkness. Six flashes, then only darkness.

The boys stood rooted to the spot, not ten feet from the door of the office.

“There’s that thing again,” Tish moaned.

Biff shook his head. “I don’t think so,” he said.

“Even if it isn’t,” Tish whispered, “I’m not interested in what it is!” He started to run.

“Wait a second,” Biff said, grabbing his arm. “I’ve got a hunch.”

“Have your hunch under the bed,” Tish whispered.

“No, wait,” Biff said. “That’s not the same kind of light we saw in the wall.”

“What difference does it make?” Tish said, trying to pull loose.

“Nothing ghostly about this light,” said Biff, starting to steal toward the glass-faced door.

Tish glided along behind Biff, keeping the blond boy between himself and whatever might come out that door.

Biff crept up to the door, leaned down and listened. A sound of something sliding came clearly and unmistakably to his ears. Something heavy, against the floor.

He reached down and gently turned the knob.

Locked! But of course.

## STICKY-FINGERED GHOST 91

He twisted it a couple of times and when he did, there was a thump and silence.

Biff turned, looked at Tish, and shrugged his shoulders. He stared at the glass of the door as if hoping to penetrate the frosted pane. Then he nodded toward their room, and they hurried back to their quarters.

Neither of the boys rested much that night. A half-dozen times, they roused, thinking they heard something in the ice, until sleep finally overcame them.

Biff had rehearsed the exact words he was going to use in telling his dad what they had seen this night. But in the cold light of morning, Biff and Tish agreed that nothing would sound sillier or do less for their prestige than to tell the older men they had seen a ghost the night before!

They had risen later than usual, and Tish had hurried off without breakfast, saying that he was already late to meet Shake at the mine entrance and help him unload supplies.

Biff dressed slowly, thinking over the mysterious happenings of the night before. He was lost in these thoughts when his dad walked in.

“Oh, Biff, I’d like to see you for a moment,” Tom Brewster said.

“Sure, Dad,” Biff answered, having a hunch about what it was his father wanted to discuss.

Biff’s father lit his pipe, blew out the match, and said, “Were you and Tish wandering around the mine last night?”

“Yes, Dad,” Biff answered, “but-“

“You didn’t get into any mischief, did you?”

“No, sir,” Biff answered. “None at all.”

“I thought not,” his father said, “but you’d better come with me anyway.”

Biff hurried to finish dressing, wondering where his father intended to take him.

“All set,” he said, standing up.

“Fine, now let’s walk around to Corbin Davis’ office,” said Tom Brewster.

Biff followed silently, and in a few minutes they were sitting in the mine boss’s office.

“Son!” boomed Corbin Davis, without preliminary, “one of my men tells me you and your Eskimo pal were roaming around the mine last night!”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did you come into this office?” asked Corbin Davis.

“No, sir.”

The mine boss relaxed. “Good, I was sure you wouldn’t do such a thing.”

“But someone was in here,” Biff said.

The mine boss sat up straight. “Who?” he demanded.

“I don’t know,” said Biff. “I saw lights going on and off. But when I tried the door the light went out, and the sounds stopped.”

“That’s all?”

“That’s all,” said Biff.

“You didn’t see anybody leave?”

“Not by that door,” Biff said.

“What time was this?” Corbin Davis asked.

“About midnight,” Biff said.

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The mine boss had reached into his drawer and pulled some papers halfway out. “Midnight! What were you doing around the mine



at midnight?"

Biff looked at his dad, then back at Corbin Davis. "If I told you, you wouldn't believe me, sir," he said.

"Try me," said the mine chief, sliding the drawer shut.

But before Biff could speak they heard the screech of the mine emergency siren.

Corbin Davis jumped to his feet and started for the door.

As they opened the door, a mine technician hurried up and shouted, "There's been an accident. Bill Blair's fallen down the cooling shaft!"

## CHAPTER XII

### The Spirit Strikes

AS BIFF followed Corbin Davis and Mr. Brewster into the cooling-shaft room, he saw that almost everyone in the mine had hurried to this spot.

There was a crowd circling the deep hole in the ice. They elbowed their way through and looked down into the shaft. At the bottom, they saw the limp form of Bill Blair. He was lying half spilled out of the Bo'sun's chair which was used to lower maintenance workers into the shaft. The chair hung on long ropes suspended from the winch at the top of the shaft. His head was resting on the edge of the big tank containing the reactor cells.

"He went down to check the cells," one of the reactor technicians was explaining. "About twenty feet from the bottom, something happened to the brake." He looked down with a shudder. "Blair fell the rest of the way."

"Well, we've got to get him out of there," boomed Corbin Davis. "Who will volunteer to go down?" He

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looked at the encircling Indian faces as he asked the question.

The natives shrank back, muttering, "Glacier Ghost make fall."

One native did not shrink back. Gizmo.

“Gizmo, how about you?” Corbin Davis asked. “You work with Mr. Blair all the time.”

The huge Indian gazed down the shaft at the inert form, hitched his pants, and looked disdainfully at the other natives.

He stepped forward and nodded.

“Good man,” said Davis, slapping Gizmo on his broad back. “Down you go.”

The big Tlingit Indian eased himself over the side of the shaft, slipped his foot in a loop made in the end of the rope, and swung out over the deep hole.

“If the chair isn’t smashed too badly, put him back in it, and we’ll haul him up,” Corbin said as the men began to lower Gizmo.

Biff marveled at his easy, natural grace. As Gizmo dropped lower and lower into the shaft, the rope began to sway, and the Indian swung from wall to icy wall. But the Tlingit fended them off with feet and hands as casually as a high-wire artist.

“How did it happen?” whispered a voice in Biff’s ear.

It was Tish, attracted by the alarm.

“They said it was an accident,” Biff answered. He looked hard at the brake wheel that had failed, then back at Tish. “That’s what they say” he whispered.

“Gizmo’s reached bottom,” one of the technicians

announced. They looked down to see Gizmo standing on the edge of the cooling tank far below.

He lifted the slumped form of the slight scientist as easily as a baby. Tucking Blair under one arm, he righted the chair on which the man had been lowered and signaled that it was usable. They watched him tighten the safety belt around the stricken man, and signal for them to haul away.

Dr. Gordon Larabee, the mine doctor, had just arrived and was having a stretcher prepared at the edge of the cooling shaft, when they heard a sudden shout of alarm from below.

“Look at Gizmo! Something’s the matter with him,” said Corbin

Davis, pointing down the shaft.

The shout rose now to a terrified cry. Gizmo was staring off into the darkness at the bottom of the cooling shaft. He moaned something in his own language.

The Indians had crowded to the edge of the shaft to see the cause of the excitement and were chattering among themselves.

“He says he sees something.” Tish announced.

Gizmo obviously was terror-stricken. Suddenly, they saw him grab the rope which dangled from the chair holding the unconscious Bill Blair. He began to shake the rope, insisting they lower it and take him out at once.

“He’ll dash Blair right out of that seat,” shouted Corbin Davis. “We’ve got to do something.”

Biff looked at the terrified faces of the Indians who were recoiling from the edge of the shaft. About half-

way down the shaft, he could see the chair holding the scientist being dashed from wall to wall. The unconscious man had slumped in the chair and was in danger of slipping out of the seat entirely.

With a quick vault, Biff leaped for the swaying rope. He was still wearing his deerskin gloves, and they protected his hands against rope burn as he slid swiftly down the swaying strand.

The cries of Gizmo had settled to a steady moan now, but he was jerking the rope in monotonous frenzy and Biff felt as though he were hanging on to the end of a whip.

The friction of his slide began to burn Biff’s hands, and he could smell the scorched leather of his gloves. He looked below and knew he must not slow down. Blair had almost slipped from the chair careening wildly below him.

Then Biff felt his feet touch the halter holding the chair. With a quick dip of the knees, he curled his legs around the halter, reached down and grabbed the flopping left arm of the unconscious Bill Blair.

It was agony trying to steady the sack-like form of the injured

man against the wild swaying of the rope. He could hear the winch hauling them toward the surface, and prayed that his strength and the rope would hold. He had only one leg free to fend off the wall, as the chair swung wildly from one side to the other. His right leg and arm were wrapped around the chair halter. He was using his left arm to hold Bill Blair in the chair.

And then it was done. They were at the top, and

## THE SPIRIT STRIKES 99

strong arms reached out to help. Bill Blair was lifted ,from the chair, and Biff leaned puffing against the power winch.

“That was a courageous thing to do,” said Corbin Davis.

“I’ve had a little practice with rope climbing lately,” panted Biff, looking at Tish.

The cries of the terrified Gizmo had fallen away to a dull moan. The Indian had fallen to his haunches and only stared into the darkness.

“The other Indians say he’s seen the Glacier Ghost,” said Tish.

“Well, ghost or no ghost, he’s got to come out of there,” snapped the mine superintendent.

“I speak his language,” Tish said. “I’ll go down and get him to climb in this chair.”

They put the chair in place and lowered the Eskimo boy into the shaft. When Tish reached bottom, he spoke soothingly to the terrified Gizmo. On shaking legs, the big man heaved himself into the chair. Tish tightened the belt about him, then curled himself around the chair halter and gave the signal to haul away.

All the way up, they could hear the Indian repeating some strange guttural phrase. And when he was finally hauled over the side, his eyes were staring and his limbs were rigid.

The mine doctor looked closely at Gizmo.

“Shock,” he announced. “Or to be more accurate, he’s scared stiff.”

The other Indians were standing in a little group,

looking at Gizmo. To see this great hulk of man reduced to childlike immobility by fright alone, was an awesome experience to them.

“We’ve got to get Gizmo out of here and completely away from the mine,” said Mr. Davis. “If those other Indians keep looking at him, they’ll *all* be scared stiff.”

“I could send him in to the hospital at Cordova for a few days,” Dr. Larabee said.

“How about Bill Blair?” asked Biff’s father.

“I’d rather not move him right now,” the doctor said, glancing toward the stretcher where Bill Blair had begun to stir and rub a big bump on his head.

“The *Williuaiv* is outside. We can fly Gizmo in any time you say,” Tish said to Corbin Davis.

“Do it right now then,” ordered the burly mine boss.

“I’ll give Gizmo a sedative, then radio Cordova and tell them you are coming so they will have an ambulance waiting for you,” the doctor said.

Biff asked permission to fly in to Cordova with the *Williwaw*, and his father gave him a quick okay.

Dr. Larabee led Gizmo out of the cooling shaft room, and the boys followed the two men toward the main mine exit.

Biff looked at the broad back of the Indian, who was being led like a child by the doctor.

“Imagine a guy that size being scared by the boogie man!” he muttered to Tish.

“Are you sure it was the boogie man?” Tish said softly, gazing straight ahead.

## THE SPIRIT STRIKES 101

“Oh, come on,” Biff taunted. “You were down there. You saw there was nothing.”

The Eskimo boy continued to gaze straight ahead.

“Yes, I was down there,” Tish said.

“And there was *nothing*, right?”

Tish looked hard at Biff. “You city folks and your logic,” he said.

## CHAPTER XIII

### That Man Again

BIFF had never seen Tish so uncommunicative. All the way in to Cordova the Eskimo lad answered only when spoken to and volunteered nothing. After a few minutes of trying to draw Tish from his shell without success, Biff gave up.

He looked back at Ghost Glacier and at the mine’s radio antenna standing out starkly on the mountain above the ice floe. He wondered what some of the old-time prospectors would have thought to see the antenna perched up there, a link between two ages -the Ice Age and the Space Age.

This was literally true, thought Biff, for the glaciers that dominated the surface below were really a holdover from the days-thousands of years ago- when the earth as far south as Indiana was covered with just such glacial ice. The earth’s climate had changed, Biff’s dad had told him, and century by century the glaciers retreated until they occupied only small patches of the earth’s surface near both poles.

### THAT MAN AGAIN 103

Alaska was one of the few places on earth where .man could still see an early stage of the earth’s development.

Before Biff realized it, Tish was saying, “Seat belts,” and they were tightening up for the descent toward Cordova. When he checked Gizmo’s belt, the Indian seemed quiet and relaxed.

Tish maneuvered the *Williwaiv* down through the haze overhanging the Copper River delta where it merged with the Gulf of Alaska. The delta was fully fifty miles wide here, with the main channel split into countless small streams, and the streams piled up countless islands of silt. Water fowl and aquatic animals scattered as they made their approach over the water.

Every building in Cordova could be seen from here, for the

population of the town was only 2,500. Yet it was by far the largest town for a hundred miles in every direction.

Tish “greased” the *Williwaw* in on the snowy runway reserved for ski-planes. After taxiing a short distance, he pulled the ship up before a pair of gasoline pumps standing in front of a small hangar on which was painted: lakum airlines.

When they piled out of the *Williwaw*, Biff could see two other ships in the hangar with the Lakum insignia on them. One was a small Piper and the other a DC-3.

A mechanic trotted out of the hangar and made ready to gas up the *Williwaw*. When he saw them leading Gizmo out of the ship and toward the airport

terminal building, he sidled close to Shake and started asking questions.

“I hope Shake can remember all the details of this ghost story,” Biff said to Tish, who was walking on the other side of the big Indian.

“If he doesn’t, Charlie’ll make up a few,” Tish grinned. Then, with the ice broken, he added, “I guess you think I’m a nut acting the way I did after I came up out of that cooling shaft today.”

“Nope,” said Biff, reaching behind Gizmo to slap Tish on the back. “It’s a free country. *Believe* in ghosts if you want to. But before you make up your mind for sure, I want to ask you one question.”

“What’s that?” asked Tish.

“If this big Indian was too scared of the glacier ghost to come out on the glacier and help us that day at the crevasse, how come he was so brave about defying the boogie man today?”

Tish looked at Biff, then at the big Indian, as though the thought had never occurred to him.

“Do you suppose-” Tish began.

“Suppose what?” Biff said, deciding to let the Eskimo finish what he had already decided himself.

“Do you suppose Gizmo knew that it wasn’t any ghost that caused Bill Blair’s fall down the cooling shaft?”

“I think that’s a darned good suppose,” Biff said.

Gizmo smiled vacantly, apparently unaware that the conversation concerned him.

When they had packed the big Indian into the ambulance it was only a few minutes’ drive to the Cor-

## THAT MAN AGAIN 105

dova hospital and a few minutes more to register him.

A black-haired man who introduced himself as Dr. McDermott gave Gizmo a quick examination, then told a nurse to assign him to a room where he would come to give him a more complete examination later.

“I’ve been in on this glacier ghost story since the day it started,” the doctor said, smiling. “But this is the first time I’ve seen one of its victims.”

The remark seemed significant to Biff, and he asked the doctor what he meant.

“I was here the day the two prospectors brought in Lank Leominister’s friend Aniak. He had apparently been wandering for days without food or shelter after Lank fell into the crevasse.”

“Did he explain why Lank was near that crevasse in the first place?” Biff asked.

“I imagine Leominister had finally located his long lost Moon Ore and went down to take a look at the stuff,” said Dr. McDermott.

“Is that what Aniak said?”

“Aniak was unable to talk coherently in his condition,” said the doctor. “He kept re-living the experience at the crevasse and mumbling something about a ‘Lodge Where Moon Hides.’ “

Biff glanced significantly at Tish. It was the same phrase they had heard from the Glacier Ghost!

“Then why do you think Lank had finally found the main deposit of Moon Ore?” Biff asked.

“Because of the ore sample Aniak had clutched in his fist and the



general drift of his delirium,” the doctor said.

“Who was Lank Leominister, doctor?” Biff asked curiously.  
“Where did he come from?”

Leominister, explained the doctor, had come to Alaska at a time when residents asked few questions of newcomers. His accent seemed to be eastern and his manner highly educated. He lived in some isolated valley back near Ghost Glacier, only Aniak knew exactly where. He came to town once every six months, picked up the supply of Boston newspapers he had mailed to him every day and would disappear back into the wilderness. He apparently considered society’s everyday goals as too insignificant to bother with.

“Well,” the doctor finished, “I can’t stand here talking. I’ve got a million things to do. Check on your friend Gizmo tomorrow. I’m sure he’ll be all right.”

At that moment Biff heard someone mention his name. It was the nurse at the front desk, he soon discovered, and she was speaking on the telephone.

“Biff Brewster, the boy who brought in the patient from Ghost Glacier Mine? Yes, he’s here.”

Biff looked inquiringly at Tish, and together they went to the desk.

“Yes, I’ll tell him right now,” the nurse was concluding. Hanging up, she glanced at the boys and said, “That was from the airport. They received a radio message from the mine asking that you return as soon as possible.”

“Did they say why?” Tish inquired.

“No,” replied the nurse.

THAT MAN AGAIN 107

Biff and Tish told the nurse that they would be back to check on Gizmo the next day, and made for the front door. As they did, they almost walked into the arms of a man just entering the hospital.

The man was the tall, blond stranger whom Biff had mistaken for the Anchorage saboteur at Misery’s restaurant.

### Figment's Fingerprints

"NOW what do you suppose *he's* doing here at the hospital?" said Biff, as the boys hurried down the walk.

"I'm more interested in finding out why the mine called for you and me instead of Shake," said Tish as they broke into a fast trot toward the airport.

"I wonder whom he's going to see," Biff said, looking over his shoulder.

"We can find that out tomorrow," Tish insisted. "First let's find out what's cooking at the mine."

When they trotted through the gate at the airport, they discovered to their surprise that the *Wuliwaw* was gone. Charlie, the mechanic, hurried over from the gasoline pumps when he saw them arrive and said: "Shake got an emergency call from a mining camp up country. Cook up there has appendicitis, and he had to go pick him up. He said for you two to use the *Tumblebug* to fly to the mine."

Biff helped Tish push the little Piper airplane out of

### FIGMENT'S FINGERPRINTS 109

the hangar, and though the gusty winds tore at the little ship, the Eskimo seemed to know the *Tumble-bug's* ways and soon had the ship in the air and buzzing toward the glacier country.

There had been faint signs of spring around Cordova, but there were none in the land of the ice floes. Only the muddy Copper River, pointing their route out for them, gave any sign that somewhere the snow was thawing and the ice beginning to melt.

When they sighted the mud flats in front of Ghost Glacier, Tish remarked that the beach seemed even narrower than it had that morning. A combination of the river rising and the glacier slipping a little faster, he explained.

They saw no one out front as they landed and taxied up toward the mine entrance. The ice-cutting machine, usually busy belching ice blocks from the discharge tunnel at this time of day, was not at its job.

It was a welcome relief to get out of the biting wind and into the quiet confines of the entry tunnel. But Biff felt slightly concerned at the strange air of inactivity about the place.

They hopped on to the mine buggy waiting near the entrance and whirled off toward the main corridor deep in the ice pack.

Just as they spun around the last curve and headed for the big tunnel they saw a large group of mine personnel gathered at the intersection. At the center of the group were most of the Indian laborers from the mine and gathered around them were Biff's father, Corbin Davis, and Bill Blair.

The boys were surprised to see Blair up and around and doing most of the talking.

As they braked to a stop, they could hear Bill Blair groping for words to make himself understood to the Indians in their own tongue.

"Well, just in the nick of time," boomed Corbin Davis, as Biff and Tish joined the group. "These Indians have suddenly forgotten how to speak English, and we need someone who can speak Tlingit to them."

Biff pushed Tish forward. "That's Tish's department," he said. "What's up?"

"The Indians have gone on strike," his father explained. "Bill Blair's accident convinced them that the glacier ghost is angry at us, and they are afraid to go on working."

"They're even refusing to speak English so as not to anger the ghost," Bill Blair said. "It's just a device to keep us from getting through to them, I believe." The black-haired technician was rubbing a large bruise on his head as he spoke.

"You'd better go back to the infirmary and take it easy," Corbin Davis said, placing a hand on Bill Blair's shoulder. "I'm sure Tish can talk some sense into them."

"You hope," muttered Tish as they pushed him toward the group of taciturn Indians.

Biff watched the stubby Eskimo move into the circle of laborers and begin to talk to them in their own language.

"I hope the young fellow can convince them this

ghost business is so much poppycock,” murmured Corbin Davis to Biff and his dad.

“I’m not sure Tish is the best man for *that*” said Biff, glancing toward his pal.

“What do you mean by that?” demanded Corbin Davis.

“Well, it has to do with what I started to tell you this morning—why we were roaming around the mine at midnight last night.”

Bill Blair weaved unsteadily on his feet, and Corbin Davis reached out a hand to help him. “I want to hear that explanation,” Davis said, looking at Biff, “but first we must see that Blair is taken care of here.” He motioned to one of the mine technicians, and Bill Blair was led away toward the infirmary, which was near the office of the burly mine boss.

Biff, his father, and Corbin Davis went into the big man’s office. Davis dropped wearily into his chair and said: “Now, what about last night?”

“Well,” Biff began, “We think we saw the Glacier Ghost.”

Corbin Davis gave Mr. Brewster a faintly amused glance, then looked back at Biff. “Go ahead,” he said.

Biff told the story from beginning to end—about the voices in the glacier wall, the sounds near the cooling shaft and the strange specter floating in the ice. He wound up by repeating what he had seen in Mr. Davis’ office as they fled from the cooling room.

Corbin Davis was silent for a long time. Then he reached down and slowly opened his desk drawer.

“I don’t know that these things you saw were ghosts,” he said, smiling, “but I’m certain you saw something prowling around the mine, particularly in this office.” As he spoke, the mine boss removed a heavy sheaf of papers from his desk drawer.

“What are those, sir?” Biff Brewster inquired.

“The Lank Leominister papers,” said Corbin Davis.

Biff Brewster leaned forward with keen interest. So these were the

strange notes which had started this fabulous search!

Corbin Davis was flicking through the sheaf of papers. They appeared to be notes written on every conceivable type of scratch paper, including the backs of envelopes, calendars, newspaper edges, and even cigarette papers.

“No wonder Washington failed to take Leominister seriously for so long,” Mr. Brewster said. “These certainly look like the scribbings of a crackpot.”

Examining them, Biff couldn’t help agreeing.

“And the way they arrived,” Corbin Davis added. “With postage due most of the time. If his letters hadn’t gotten to be quite a joke down there, I doubt that they would ever have been saved. Fortunately somebody started a file of them, and once started, it simply was continued.”

“And it was the ore sample you finally received which made all this make sense, sir?” said Biff.

“Yes. And even that came to us through another -character,” Mr. Davis chuckled. “He has offered to give us lessons in mining a few times!”

## FIGMENT’S FINGERPRINTS 113

Biff smiled to himself, thinking of Misery McDonald. Then he remembered what they had been talking about. “Sir, you were saying about someone being in here last night,” he prompted.

“Yes, someone who was interested in these Leomin-ister papers,” Mr. Davis said. “They had been disarranged when I opened my drawer.”

“I imagine the prowler left in a hurry,” Biff said.

“But where did the prowler go?” said Corbin Davis. “The door was locked.”

Tom Brewster was on his feet, searching the wall. “I’ve been doing so much tunneling around here lately-I wonder-“

Biff jumped to his feet. “That’s it, I’ll bet!” he exclaimed. “Through the wall!”

He walked to the aluminum-paneled wall and began searching its surface. He noticed a trickle of moisture seeping out from under one of the squares.

“How about here?” he said, poking his finger under the edge of the panel.

The panel came loose and fell on the floor with a clatter. They stooped to look at the ice that had been exposed. They saw at once that a large cake of ice had been cut from the wall and had been only partially returned to the hole which had been left.

Biff pushed against the cake and it slid backwards. When he had pushed as far as his arm would reach, the two men dropped to their knees and looked through the hole.

Behind it was a tunnel running parallel with the walls of the office.

“That’s how he got out,” Tom Brewster said. “But the prowler was in too much of a hurry to push this ice block all the way back into place.”

“Did you know the tunnel was here?” Biff asked.

“As your father said,” explained Corbin Davis, “we dig tunnels here in the mine every day. When we finish with them we simply wall them up or fill them with ice cut from the new tunnels.”

“Let’s go in and have a look at it,” Biff suggested. He crawled through the hole, followed by his dad and the mine chief. Tom Brewster had obtained a flashlight and was shining it toward both ends of the tunnel. It ran for about fifty feet toward the living quarters and about seventy-five feet in the direction of the mine and the cooling shaft.

Biff hurried to the spot in the tunnel where he judged it was adjacent to the cooling shaft. A slow smile spread over his face as he began to search the icy wall. Suddenly he squatted down and asked his father to bring the flashlight closer.

“Look,” Biff said, pointing the light at a squarely outlined depression in the ice. It was exactly like the hole they had found in the wall of the superintendent’s office.

Biff pushed the ice block forward, peered through into the cooling

shaft room and looked back at his father with a big smile.

“Well, that takes care of that ghost,” he said. “Now let’s go to the other end of the tunnel.” When they reached the other end, Biff said, “This is about opposite Tish’s and my room, right?”

## FIGMENT’S FINGERPRINTS 115

The two men agreed that was about right. - “Then here’s where the ghostly voices originated,” Biff said.

“And when they were through talking, one of them visited my office while the other one was busy in the cooling shaft,” Corbin Davis said.

“I believe I know what the ghost was doing in the cooling shaft now,” said Tom Brewster, as they started back toward the superintendent’s office.

Biff and Corbin Davis looked at him expectantly.

“The mechanic who worked on the winch tells me it looked as though the brake wheel had been tampered with. That’s what caused Bill Blair’s fall,” Mr. Brewster said.

“He was out to get Bill Blair then,” said Mr. Davis.

“Apparently.” Biff’s father nodded. “He is a key figure here.”

“But what were they after in my office?” asked Corbin Davis. “Where does that fit into the picture?”

“*Picture!* That’s it!” Biff exclaimed. “That prowler was taking pictures of the Leominister papers! That was a wink light I saw flashing!”

“That’s got to be it,” Corbin Davis agreed. “They didn’t want to alert us by stealing the papers, so they took pictures.” He paused and scratched his gray head. “But for what possible use?”

They were standing now beside the ice block leading into the office.

“There’s no doubt now that there is a plot to wreck the mine project,” said Tom Brewster. “And

the plotters must have a confederate right here in the mine. But who could it be?"

"Maybe this will help us find out," Biff said, pointing down at the block of ice used to plug the hole.

There, on the back of the block of ice, was a black handprint!

## CHAPTER XV

### Muggers

THE two older men crouched to look at the black print, every finger sharply outlined in the ice.

"He pushed the block back into the hole and didn't notice that he had put his hand on something black and was leaving his print there," said Corbin Davis.

It was a blue-black print, and as Mr. Brewster peered at it closely, he said:

"Why, this looks like carbon paper-like typewriter carbon paper."

"I'll bet there was some on your desk, and the prowler leaned on it in the dark without knowing it," Biff said.

"I'm sure that's right," Corbin Davis said. "I was doing some typing during the day."

"Can we take it off and see whose print it is?" Biff asked excitedly.

"I'm afraid not," said Mr. Davis. "On an ordinary surface we would dust the print with graphite, put Scotch tape over the print and just peel it right off

the surface. On ice we'd get nothing but a wet mess."

"Is there no way to remove the print?" Mr. Brewster asked.

"I can't think of anything, and I hesitate to take a chance on the regular method for fear of destroying our only real clue in this case."

"May I suggest something? I don't know if it would work," Biff said hesitantly.



“What is it?” asked Corbin Davis.

“Take a picture of the print,” Biff said. “Like the prowler took a picture of your papers.”

Corbin Davis looked at Tom Brewster with a smile. “Why, of course! That will work,” he boomed.

One by one, they crawled back through the hole into the office, careful not to smudge the black handprint. Biff was the last one through, and as he rose from his crouch he was surprised to see Tish standing over near the couch in the office. Sitting on the couch, his head in his hands, was Bill Blair.

“He was standing in the office as I came in, and he looked sick,” Tish said. “So I brought him over here to the couch.”

Corbin Davis hurried to Bill Blair’s side. “You need to be in bed, old boy,” he said, placing his hand sympathetically on the technician’s shoulder. Then turning to the others in the office, Mr. Davis said softly, “Probably came in wanting to go back to work. Haven’t been able to get the man to sit down since he was hurt.”

He helped Blair to his feet, then asked Tish to have someone take him to the infirmary.

## MUGGERS 119

When the technician had been led out the door, Corbin Davis sprang into action. He hurried to the big office where most of the technicians had desks, obtained a camera and some fast film, and returned to the office.

While Biff explained to Tish what they had discovered, they took about ten shots of the black handprint so as to be sure to have one that was positively legible.

Removing the film roll from the camera, he sealed it, slid it into a small box and turned to the two boys.

“Now then, you boys take over,” he said.

Biff and Tish looked at each other, then waited expectantly for orders.

“Every man in this mine has his fingerprints on file with the FBI

in Washington,” said Corbin Davis. “I’m going to mail these prints to them for checking. You will fly them in to Cordova.”

“Yes, sir!” said Biff eagerly.

“Meanwhile,” continued Mr. Davis, “I will code a message and radio it to Cordova airport so they can relay it to Washington for me.”

“Code?” said Tom Brewster in surprise.

“Yes, we use a code in sending top-secret information to Washington from the mine here.”

He slapped the package of film into Biff’s hand and said, “Good luck!”

Biff turned to Tish. “Are you all through talking to the Indians?” he asked.

“Yes, I think I’ve got them calmed down-at least temporarily,” the other boy announced.

“Good boy,” said Corbin Davis. “Now get going!”

The boys started out the door when it was blocked by Dr. Larabee, the mine physician.

“Blair isn’t getting any better,” he said to Corbin Davis. “I’d like to send him to Cordova hospital where I can have that head of his X-rayed.”

“Biff and Tish are going in right now,” Mr. Davis said. He turned to Tish. “Is there room in your plane?” he asked.

“Not lots, but enough,” Tish said. “We can take him.”

“Those skull injuries are tricky things,” explained Dr. Larabee as they walked out into the hall. “He’ll be better off at the hospital.”

In a few minutes Bill Blair was helped into the mine buggy. The boys trotted along behind and soon were loading him into the *Tumblebug*.

The wind was gustier than ever, but the few flakes of snow in the air didn’t promise too much trouble.

They warmed the little ship’s engine, then, with a wave at the

small group gathered in front of the mine, they bounced off across the mud flats, poised for a moment while Tish made his last-second instrument check, then sprinted down the bumpy stretch and were airborne.

It was when the little ship took leave of the ground that Biff began to understand why it had been named the *Tumblebug*. As the strong blasts of wind caught the plane, it bounced like a small bug on a wave.

“A williwaw,” said Tish, glancing out the window. “A beauty.”

MUGGERS 121

Biff glanced back to see how Bill Blair was taking the weather and saw that the technician had closed his eyes as if dozing.

When the ship rose to an altitude near the top of the mountains, the wind really hit them. But Tish just whistled tunelessly and guided the *Tumblebug* confidently toward Cordova.

After they were airborne about a half hour he looked over at Biff, winked, and said: “What else did you find out about the boogie man?”

“Tish, those voices in the wall *were* real,” Biff said. “And that shiny ghost in the ice was somebody with a flashlight walking in an abandoned tunnel.”

“That’s *your* story,” said Tish with a grin.

Biff glanced back at Bill Blair to see if they could be overheard, then leaned close to Tish and said, “Weren’t you the one who suggested that Gizmo went down into the cooling shaft after Blair because he knew a ghost hadn’t caused the fall?”

Tish looked back at Blair. “Then you think Gizmo was our ghost and was out to get Blair?”

Biff nodded slowly.

“But what about the other job you said was done last night-the pictures taken of the Leominister papers?” Tish asked.

“What about them?”

“What good are they unless whoever took ‘em can get ‘em out?” asked Tish simply.

“That’s true,” Biff said thoughtfully. “And what are they going to do with the pictures when they do get them out?”

“Could this gang mine the stuff themselves?” Tish wondered aloud.

“The rarest ore on earth?” Biff snorted. “Why, they’d have to take it to another planet to sell the stuff.” Suddenly he stopped. “Or another country,” he added slowly.

“You mean an enemy power may be trying to find the main deposit of ore to smuggle the stuff out of the country?” Tish asked.

“If this Moon Ore is all our scientists think it is, it probably would be worth the try,” said Biff.

Tish glanced back at the dozing patient behind them. “Well, if we’re making a list of suspects, I guess Gizmo eliminated *him*” he said.

“If we’re right about Gizmo, it isn’t likely he’d plot to pitch his own henchman down the cooling shaft,” Biff agreed.

Tish began to ease the stick forward as he started his descent toward Cordova. The Eskimo was using the Copper River as a guide line to their destination, and before long they began to notice the widening and splitting of the stream, indicating that they were nearing the delta.

Bill Blair had opened his eyes, and when Biff glanced back at him, the technician smiled and said he was beginning to feel better.

Tish brought the *Tumblebug* in low over the water, banked into the landing pattern at the airport, and in three minutes they were down and taxiing toward the Lakum hangar.

## MUGGERS 123

As the little ship weaved its way across the field, buffeted by the strong wind, Charlie came running out of the hangar to give them a hand.

He held one wing while Biff and Tish climbed out, followed by Bill Blair.

A terrific blast of wind struck the *Tumblebug* as they unloaded, and it took both boys and the mechanic to hold the ship down.

Bill Blair moved aside, then noting the ambulance waiting near the fence, he said, "I'm going to walk to the ambulance. I'll be all right."

The technician did seem stronger, so Biff stayed with the *Tumblebug*, and between the three of them, they wrestled the little ship into the shelter of the hangar.

When they had finished, Tish said, "Could be I'd belter stand by here and give Charlie a hand. These williwaws can tear things up."

"Okay," said Biff. "Til ride to the hospital in the ambulance with Bill Blair. When I get him settled, I'll be back."

So saying, the blond boy hurried out of the hangar toward the waiting ambulance. The back doors were closed, indicating that Bill already was inside, so Biff headed for the seat up front.

He opened the door, poked his head in, and caught a split-second glimpse of a face covered by a gauze surgical mask.

Then a fist shot out from the rear of the ambulance, a sledge-hammer blow hit him on the back of

the neck, and an ether-soaked towel was clamped over his face.

The whirling, echoing crevasse into which he now plunged was deeper by far than the one out of which he once had had to climb.

## CHAPTER XVI

### Loose Ends

"*SPICKIDA-spickida-spickida-*" The monotonous metallic sound pecked away at Biff's consciousness. Slowly his senses began to identify the sound.

It was a car engine ... the engine of the car he was lying in ... the ambulance ... parked in the dark somewhere ... in a garage... .

Biff shook his head, half rose, then fell back as the strong ether fumes made him slightly ill. When he had marshalled strength to rise and turn, he looked straight into the frightened eyes of Bill Blair, lying on the stretcher beside him.

"Wha-what happened?" Biff groaned.

“Two men,” said Bill Blair. “They threw a blanket over my head. Then I heard them slug you.” Blair flopped back on the stretcher, exhausted.

Biff was gulping air, trying to clear his drugged brain. Suddenly he glanced down at his rumpled clothes and remembered the package with the fingerprints.

He slapped the pocket where it should be, then the other pocket. He searched the floor of the ambulance. But the package was gone.

Suddenly there was a banging on the back doors of the ambulance. A voice was shouting, “Open up there! What’s happened here?”

Biff slipped the inner latch, and as the doors swung open he looked out at Dr. McDermott.

“Where are we?” Biff said groggily.

“You’re in the hospital garage,” the doctor exclaimed. “But where is the driver? What has happened?”

“I’d like to know that myself,” said Biff.

Two hospital attendants came hurrying from the elevator, and at the doctor’s order they took Bill Blair’s stretcher from the ambulance and headed toward the receiving room.

“I must get back to the airport and radio the mine,” said Biff shakily. “I’ve got to tell them about the prints being stolen!”

The doctor steadied Biff as the boy staggered slightly. Then he reached in to the ambulance, found the ether-soaked towel, and held it up.

“Is this what they used?” he asked Biff.

“That and the strongest sock in the neck I ever felt,” Biff groaned, rubbing his skull.

“You people from Ghost Glacier furnish me more patients than a miner’s saloon on Saturday night,” grumbled Dr. McDermott. “Have you any idea who did this?”

Biff opened his mouth to answer when he was in-

interrupted by a muffled cry from somewhere close by. JHe and the doctor followed the sound into a little hall at the foot of some stairs between the upper floor of the hospital and the garage. Under the stairs was a little alcove. It was from this small, dark area that the sound was coming.

They dashed toward the sound, and there lay a man in hospital whites. He had a gag in his mouth and was tied hand and foot. Biff knew this must be the ambulance driver.

They helped the man to his feet, ripped the gag loose, and in a few minutes the driver was gasping out his story.

He had been mugged, he explained, just as he came down the stairs to get in the ambulance and drive to the airport to pick them up. Someone stepped out from under the stairs as he passed and slugged him. He had been dragged beneath the stairs and left there.

“Well, I’ll say one thing,” Biff exclaimed. “These two guys are a nervy pair. They slug you, tuck you under your own stairs, steal your ambulance, and drive it right back here where they got it. Then they just evaporate!”

“How would they have the nerve to do such a thing?” Dr. McDermott said.

Biff shook his head, trying to clear the ether haze that was still there. “The more I think of it, the smarter I think it was,” he said. “They probably drove back here because this is the one place an ambulance wouldn’t be conspicuous. And maybe they thought *they* wouldn’t be, either!”

“What do you mean?” the doctor demanded. “Do you suggest that one of the hospital staff-?”

“Not necessarily,” Biff said. “Just anyone who wouldn’t look conspicuous around here.” A light was beginning to wink on in his brain. “It could have been a patient-or a visitor-or both.”

“I still don’t understand,” said the doctor.

Biff’s mind was really ticking now. “That tall, blond man with the black coat, fur collar-the one who came in just as I left for the mine a few hours ago. Whom was he here to see, doctor?”

“Why, your friend Gizmo,” said the doctor. “He’s still with him.”

That really cleared Biff’s head. “What is Gizmo’s room number?” he asked.

“Thirty-two,” said Dr. McDermott.

“I’ll be back to compare notes with you,” Biff said to the ambulance driver who was sitting on the steps, trying to regain his equilibrium.

He bounded up the steps, feeling a little giddy, but he fought off the feeling and headed down the hall toward room thirty-two.

There was no plan in Biff’s mind—just a determination to find out who the tall, blond man was. To find out what he was doing visiting Gizmo, of all people.

Biff pushed open the door of room thirty-two and stepped inside.

Gizmo was sitting up in bed and showed some surprise as Biff walked into the room. The tall, blond man remained perfectly calm.

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“Well,” he said cordially. “To use your words, we meet again.” He laughed. “And again and again.” Thrusting out his hand, the man said, “My name is Owen McBain. I’m here interviewing your friend for an article I’m writing about Ghost Glacier.”

“Article?” Biff echoed.

“Yes,” said Owen McBain. “I’ve talked to the mine boss out there and to Bill Blair also. I want to cover all the angles on this story—including,” he smiled toward Gizmo, “the ghost story.”

Biff was beginning to feel ridiculous. Had he stuck

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his foot into something that looked suspicious but had a perfectly logical explanation?

McBain saw Biff’s face begin to redden, and he said, “You apparently have me connected with something or someone unpleasant. Are you convinced now?”



Biff wanted to get close to the man, to sniff and see if he could smell ether fumes on him-anything to confirm what had seemed like such a logical hunch just a few minutes before. But he knew this was ridiculous and he began to back toward the door. He mumbled some good wishes to Gizmo, bowed to the thin man, and stumbled out of the room.

Was that a snicker he heard as the door shut behind him? Biff bent close and listened. He heard nothing-Then, right at his ear, a voice said, "Say, I've been

looking for you, Brewster."

He looked up to see the ambulance driver standing beside him.

"I just remembered something I noticed right before I was slugged," the driver said.

Biff glanced at the door of Gizmo's room, took the driver's arm, and started to lead him down the hall.

"I noticed a funny smell as I walked down the stairs to go to the ambulance," the man started. "At first I didn't realize what it was, but when I thought about it I realized it was a tobacco smell." The driver reached into the pocket of his uniform. "So I went back and looked under the stairs where those guys waited for me, and I found this." He held up a brown-papered cigarette butt.

Biff took the butt, sniffed it, and detected a strange, spicy scent unlike any he'd ever smelled before.

"Evidently one of these two guys smoked while they were waiting for me," the driver concluded.

Biff stared at the cigarette, looked away and stared again. Where had he seen a cigarette like this before? Or *had* he?

"Look, you can hang on to that if you want to," the ambulance driver said. "I've got to make a call."

"Already?" Biff said, and when the driver nodded he added, "No rest for the weary, huh?"

"It's a call out by the airport. Want a ride?" the driver asked.

"Say, I sure do," Biff said. "Let me go check on my patient, and I'll

be right with you.”

He hurried to the X-ray room where Dr. Mc-Dermott was just finishing with Bill Blair. He strolled in, looked down at the technician, and saw that his

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eyes were clear and that he seemed to be in good shape.

“I’m going to run out to the airport,” he said. “I’ve got to radio the mine about what happened in the ambulance.”

Bill Blair raised up. “Any clues yet?” he asked.

Biff started to say no, then remembered the brown cigarette butt and raised it to eye level. “Just one.” He smiled. “But it could be we’ll make someone very sorry he took up the smoking habit.”

He winked at Bill Blair, said he would see him the next day, and ran to join the ambulance driver.

It was a short jaunt to the airport, and all the way out Biff was rehearsing the bad news he was going to have to pass on to his father and Corbin Davis. The only way his attackers could have known he was carrying the fingerprints, Biff decided, was by breaking Corbin Davis’ secret code. That would shock the gray-haired man. Too, it meant that they were practically back where they started from with regard to any tangible clues to the identity of the men behind this strange plot against the Ghost Glacier Mine.

The only clue left was right in his hand, thought Biff, looking down at the odd brown cigarette butt.

They pulled up in front of the terminal building and after thanking the driver for the lift, Biff hurried through the door and up the steps to the radio room.

He was surprised, upon entering the room, to find that the operator was in contact with Ghost Glacier at that very moment.

The heavy voice of Corbin Davis was saying, “I have a message I’d like you to relay to Washington.”

Biff hurried to the operator’s desk and said breathlessly, “Excuse me, sir. Would you tell Mr. Davis that Biff Brewster has something

important to tell him?"

The operator passed on Biff's message, and Corbin Davis was soon heard saying: "Yes, Biff-what is it?"

"Mr. Davis," Biff stammered-his carefully rehearsed words flying right out of his mind-"that package I was given to mail. It was stolen."

There was a short, shocked pause. Then Corbin Davis said: "How did it happen, Biff?"

"Someone hijacked the hospital ambulance," Biff explained. "They sluggish me when I got in. They must have broken your code and known I was carrying the-the prints!"

"But I haven't even sent the coded message!" Davis exclaimed. "I was getting ready to do that when you broke in!"

"Then how did they know I had the prints?" Biff exclaimed.

"You and Tish come on back to the mine," said Corbin Davis' solemn voice at the other end.

"But how-?"

"Come back to the mine," said Mr. Davis. And Biff heard him flick off his radio.

## CHAPTER XVII

### Displaced Persons

THE *Tumblebug* pitched and yawed in the high wind sweeping across the glacier country, but Biff hardly took notice of the uncomfortable ride. The fingerprints had been their most important clue, he was thinking. Now all they had left was the brown-paper cigarette butt he was rolling back and forth in his fingers.

"Hey, you're ruining our clue," laughed Tish, noticing that Biff had rolled almost all of the strangely scented tobacco from the stub.

"Might as well," said Biff disconsolately. "I've ruined everything else."

"Aw forget it," his Eskimo pal said. "It wasn't your fault you got sluggish!"

Tish was beginning to ease the *Tumblebug* lower as they approached the vicinity of Ghost Glacier and for the next few minutes Biff contented himself with trying to pick out the mine's radio antenna on the mountain ahead.

But as they drew closer to terrain which had become familiar to Biff, terrain which he knew was close to Ghost Glacier, he saw no tower.

He glanced around to get his bearings. Things did look differently from the air.

But when he looked at Tish he knew that the Eskimo boy was also concerned.

"Where's the tower, Tish?" Biff said finally.

Tish was shaking his head slowly. Suddenly he pointed to the mountain.

There, sprawled down the far side of the ridge, lay the mine's radio tower.

And far below it, where the mud flats had once been, there was now a field of broken ice!

"The end of the glacier's broken off!" shouted Biff.

Tish began to bank the *Tumblebug* in a wide, continuous turn, examining the scene below. The icy debris covered almost all of the mud flats. There was one small strip left that might conceivably be used for a landing, but it would be risky.

Biff, meanwhile, was fighting down a rising feeling of panic. What had happened to the mine-to his dad and the rest of the men? And why had the ice suddenly broken off this way?

"Oh, I get it," Tish said, smiling. "Why, this was nothing but an earthquake!"

"*Nothing* but an earthquake?" shouted Biff. "Since when was an earthquake nothing?"

"Why, earthquakes are as common up here as thun-

derstorms in Indiana,” Tish said. “I’ll bet this one never even touched the mine.”

Biff began to feel a little better.

And then Tish shouted, “Look!” He was pointing toward a hole in the face of the glacier. It was a part of the entry tunnel at the spot where the glacier had broken off. Walking out of the tunnel came first Corbin Davis and then Tom Brewster! When they saw the *Tumblebug* overhead they waved, and Biff could tell that everything was all right.

“They’re okay!” Tish yelled.

“Yes,” said Biff relieved, and added, “But now what about us?”

Tish took another look at the small stretch of mud not covered by the broken ice below. “Want to try it?” he asked.

“There’s your answer,” Biff said, pointing to the muddy stretch below.

Biff’s dad was standing near the strip, waving his arms crosswise in a signal to stay away.

“There’s apparently something wrong with that stretch,” said Tish. “I guess we’d better look elsewhere.”

They both thought of “Little Smokey” valley at the same instant.

“Well, Shake and I have been waiting for a real emergency before using it,” he said. “Now’s the time.”

Biff looked back at the littered beach in front of the mine. His dad and the others seemed safe enough,

and perhaps by tomorrow the mine crew could clear *off* enough of the ice so they could land.

Meanwhile, a tempting adventure lay ahead-the chance to actually explore a valley where Lank might have lived. Perhaps circumstance had provided them with a chance to look for a clue that would help find the elusive Moon Ore-the important clue that Biff’s father had said was missing from the Lank Leominister papers they had.

The first sight of the small valley made Biff’s heart pound with excitement. Tish spiraled toward the green-tinged oasis, examined the

grassy surface of the valley's northern end, and made his approach into the wind whipping off the mountaintops.

The moment they dropped below the level of the mountain ridge, the wind velocity was cut in half. It was evident that the strongest winds never reached the valley into which they were flying.

"A real Shangri-La," Biff murmured.

"With hot and cold running water," said Tish, nodding first at the steam geyser at one end and the glacial stream bursting from the rocks at the other.

It was when they were only fifty feet from the ground that they saw the tracks of another plane. As the *Tumblebug's* skis touched down and they raced across the flat stretch, they saw the plane itself. It was blue and white, slightly larger than their own, and was parked under some cedar trees at the end of the small landing strip. The boys were shocked and a little irked at this surprising trespasser in their "private valley."

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Both boys strained forward to see if there were any signs of life around the plane. There were none.

Taxiing up beside the ship, Tish cut his engine, and the boys climbed out and walked over toward the plane. It was well instrumented, and in the back seat was a wooden box. Tish opened the door of the plane, took a look at the box, and whistled softly.

"What is it?" Biff asked.

"Explosive," Tish said. "Whoever owns this plane seems to be going to do some blasting. Probably some prospectors," he said.

Biff noticed some tracks leading away from the plane. They showed clearly in the snow, disappearing where the snow had melted and reappearing in the shady spots. They led toward a small stream on the edge of the clearing, along the stream, and disappeared into the cedar forest in an easterly direction.

"There were three of them," said Tish, walking along and examining the tracks.

The trail looked like a big jumble to Biff, but the Eskimo lad

seemed able to read them like a newspaper.

“Assorted sizes,” he mumbled. “Big, little, and medium-sized people.”

Biff looked at Tish in amazement and followed the Eskimo as he walked along beside the tracks.

“Can you tell what they had for breakfast?” he asked dryly.

Tish stooped down and picked up something from the snow. “No, but I can tell what one of them had after breakfast,” he said.

In his fingers he held a brown-papered cigarette butt.

Biff snatched the butt, stared at it, and looked at Tish.

“It’s our man!” he said hoarsely. “How much of a start do you think they’ve had?”

Tish walked back toward the plane, put his hand on the engine cowling, and said, “Still a little warm. About an hour, I’d say.”

“We’ve got to follow them,” Biff said grimly.

“We have no gun,” Tish said.

“We’ll stay out of sight—just trail them and find out what they’re up to,” said Biff.

“I’m with you,” Tish said. “First, let’s get the *Tum-blebug* out of sight.”

They taxied the tiny ship far into the cedars. Covering it with boughs in a hurried job of camouflage, they headed for the tracks in the snow.

The trail led over a small rise across a boulder-strewn field to the edge of the glacial stream. From the air, this had all looked so diminutive. From the ground level, it now looked huge. Behind them they could hear the steam geyser hissing warmly; but the trail into the woods looked cold and forbidding. Biff had been at enough mountain ski resorts to know that at these altitudes, the sun could make you warm when the thermometer read zero. But in the shade, it was unsunned zero, and they were heading into the shade.

They struck off up the trail following the tracks. The stream was

on their left and the mountain to their right. Out in the open the snow had almost dis-

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appeared, but as they neared the edge of the cedar forest, they could see the trail clearly outlined in the snow which the sun could not reach.

“Whoever they are, they act as if they know where they’re going,” said Tish.

“We know who it is, don’t we?” said Biff.

“We know who the cigarette smoker is,” Tish pointed out, “but we don’t know which one of the other two is leading this parade.”

Biff looked where Tish was pointing to the smallest of the tracks.

“Those aren’t the tracks of a tall, thin man like Mc-Bain,” Tish said, peering closely at the prints. “It’s an athletic, average-sized guy breaking trail.”

Biff was intrigued by the Eskimo’s ability to read the tracks. But all the while he was getting the tracking lesson from Tish, his eyes kept sweeping the trail in front of them. They must not, at all costs, run right up the heels of their quarry.

The trail seemed to stick pretty closely to the edge of the stream, and they noticed that it was growing wider as they walked. They came upon a spot where the party they were trailing had stopped. There was a jumble of tracks in this spot as though they had stopped to rest and had stood around the place for a few minutes. There was another brown-paper cigarette butt. Tish pointed to where one set of prints led off into the woods, then returned.

“The leader may have lost his way and gone looking for some landmark,” said Tish. “But apparently he came back, and he’s leading them again.”

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Biff nodded toward the trail, and again they took up the chase. They had been walking about an hour, when they came to the edge of



the forest and saw a huge boulder lying at a curve in the glacial stream. Tish peered out from the trees to make sure they would not be seen, in case their quarry was close at hand. Seeing no one, they started cautiously across the clearing toward the great boulder. They were halfway to the boulder when Tish grabbed Biff's arm and pulled him down to the ground.

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He pointed wordlessly toward the boulder. - Just barely visible around the edge of the huge stone, was a head. It was the head of a man, his back turned toward them.

Tish flung a glance toward the woods, then toward the boulder. They must have cover. If the man turned and looked their way, he would be sure to see them.

"The woods are the safest place," Tish whispered.

"We would not be able to see or hear them if we were in the woods," Biff answered. "Come on."

He wrested free from Tish's grasp and hunching low, started running for a spot behind the great stone. Once they had reached the shadow of the boulder, they were safe for a time; but Biff cupped his hand to his ear, made a face at Tish indicating he couldn't hear what the men were saying, and gave the Eskimo boy the sign to follow him around the far side of the boulder.

To their delight, there was a smaller boulder beyond the big one and clustered close to the small stone, some scrub cedar.

They crawled forward cautiously, and dashed behind the small boulder and under the thick boughs of the cedar. The voices of the men were clear now, and as Biff and Tish inched forward, the blond boy felt a prickly sensation at the nape of his neck.

Slowly they parted the softly needled branches and peeked out.

There, in the shadow of the great boulder, stood Owen McBain and the huge Indian, Gizmo, with a rifle in his hand.

Facing them was Bill Blair!

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Chilly Chase

FOR a moment, Biff let the branches close while he stared in disbelief at Tish. Not only was he astonished by the presence of Bill Blair, since every clue had indicated he was not part of this plot, but the tall figure of Owen McBain furnished another surprise.

Seeing him in his dark glasses and with a two-day growth of beard, Biff realized what he should have guessed all along. McBain was the saboteur from Anchorage-with his beard shaved off, his black hair dyed blond, and some kind of light skin makeup on his face. He had even changed the timbre of his voice in town, but now it was the same deep tone Biff had first heard.

Biff put his finger to his lips, crept closer, and listened.

“Yes,” Owen McBain was saying, “you did a good job taking those pictures of the Leominister papers and getting them out to us. I’m not questioning that.”

“I’ve been telling you all along to be patient, haven’t I?” said BUI Blair.

“But now that we’ve got them out, what good are they doing us?” McBain snapped.

“I told you,” Blair said quietly. “Those idiots at the mine don’t realize that these papers give directions to the Lodge Where Moon Hides. That’s where we’ll find the exact location of the mother lode.”

“Lodge Where Moon Hides,” snorted McBain. “That’s an Indian fable. I say let’s drop our explosive charge and let it wreck the mine my way instead of hiking around looking for some silly lodge.”

Biff dug his elbow in Tish’s ribs at mention of the explosive charge. They both knew the men must be referring to the box in the back seat of the blue plane.

“Your love of the violent has almost wrecked our plans two or three times,” Blair said quietly.

“My love of the violent saved your fingerprints from being sent to Washington,” McBain snorted.

Biff looked at Tish. Then it *inns* McBain who had hijacked him in the ambulance.

“Yes, I’ll give you and Gizmo credit for that,” Blair said. “But the idea of ordering him to shoot down that bush pilot’s plane the day the mining engineer arrived-“

“It almost worked,” said McBain.

“And he almost got caught by that boy who saw him carrying the gun that day on the glacier.” The boys saw Blair turn to the Indian. “I wish you would put that blasted rifle down,” he snarled. “You make me nervous fingering that thing.”

Gizmo looked at McBain as though asking for orders.

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“Put it down,” McBain ordered. .Gizmo walked to the rock, leaned the rifle against it, and then slumped back on the rock with arms crossed.

“If Gizmo had been able to shoot the plane down, those control units never would have made it to the mine, and our mission would have been accomplished by now,” McBain continued.

“But that’s my whole point,” Blair said. “Violence depends on too many ‘ifs.’ For instance, *if* they had not found out about the time bomb you put in their box in Anchorage, they would have blown up somewhere over the wilderness.”

“That was an unlucky break,” McBain growled.

“And *if* you had not left that distinctive cigarette stub of yours underneath the stairs while you waited for the ambulance driver, the Brewster boy would never have seen it. And // he hadn’t taken that butt out in my presence, I wouldn’t have been able to warn you that he was on your trail. It wouldn’t have taken him long to find out who smoked that kind of cigarettes.”

“Are you going to take credit for everything?” growled McBain.

“No, just the right decisions,” said Blair coldly. Biff saw the dark-haired technician slip his hand slowly into his parka pocket. “Including the one which lured you on this little wild goose chase into the bush.”

“Wild goose- The phrase died on McBain’s lips as a snub-nosed automatic leaped into Blair’s right hand.

“That’s right-wild goose chase,” Blair said harshly,

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waving the pistol at McBain and Gizmo. “A little plot I hatched up to counteract your plans to kill me,” he explained, smiling.

“Why, what are you talking about, Bill?” said McBain in an attempt at a soothing tone.

“You know what I’m talking about,” Blair snarled. “That business in the cooling shaft.”

Biff clutched Tish’s arm. Gizmo’s hand was slowly creeping toward the rifle propped against the boulder.

“I suspected you were growing impatient with my methods within the mine, and I was sure of it after that little job of sabotage on the brake wheel.”

A little trickle of perspiration dripped down Biff’s cheek as he watched Gizmo’s finger getting closer and closer to the rifle.

“Blam!” The automatic in Blair’s hand exploded and a slug ricocheted off the rock near Gizmo.

“I was waiting for you to make a move for that rifle,” Blair snapped, as Gizmo edged away from the freshly chipped spot on the rock.

The handsome technician strode over, picked up the rifle, and propped it under his arm, his automatic still pointing at the other two men.

“Yes, I suspected Gizmo had sabotaged that brake wheel, but I was certain of it after overhearing Biff Brewster and his Eskimo pal discussing it while they were flying me to the hospital.”

The boys saw McBain flick a nervous glance toward Gizmo. Blair’s deductions were hitting home.

“Yes, that’s when I was certain you were out to do me in,” Blair said harshly. “You two were waiting for

me. Biff Brewster thought you were waiting for him and the fingerprints. You heard Dr. Larabee call in and tell the hospital I was coming, and you thought that would be a good time to get me. But I outsmarted you. Why did you think I told you about the pictures of the Leominster papers the moment I climbed in the ambulance? So you wouldn't know I suspected a thing. I had decided to lead you out here on this little quest for the Lodge Where Moon Hides-where we could end our partnership in private."

"Now look, Bill," McBain said wheedlingly. "Maybe we have been a little hasty--"

"Very hasty, I would say," snapped Bill Blair. "Last night after I checked out of the hospital and into the hotel, I found you asleep so I searched your pockets. You still had these," said Blair, holding up the package of filmed fingerprints which had been stolen from Biff.

McBain slapped his pocket as though aware for the first time that his package was missing.

"Yes, the prints which might have gone on to Washington *if* I hadn't kept my ears open so I could warn you that Biff Brewster had them before he climbed into that ambulance."

"They were *your* prints," growled McBain.

"Which you promised to destroy," Blair snapped. "Were you saving them to blackmail me so that I wouldn't ever have been able to refuse to work for the party?"

"Bill, look, you've got this all wrong," said McBain.

"I had it all wrong when I threw in with you and your bunch in the first place," said Blair. "But if I can end this little partnership for good, and stop the sabotage at the mine, I just might get out of this with my career and my reputation intact." Blair raised the gun barrel. "Now turn around!"

McBain paled and slowly turned around.

"You too, Gizmo," snarled Blair.

Biff and Tish grew tense. McBain and Gizmo had turned and were now facing toward the boulder and the scrub cedars where the boys

were hiding.

“Now start walking,” they heard Blair snap.

This was a turn the boys hadn’t expected. They began to scramble backward, but realized that if they made a break for it, they would certainly be seen. If they lay where they were, they might go unnoticed, but they could not let two men be shot down in cold blood.

They heard the footsteps coming closer. Then they realized that McBain and Gizmo were standing right above them.

Tish cast a horrified look at Biff and started to make a move toward the end of the boulder. Biff reached out to grab him. When he did, his arm hit a branch of the scrub cedar and shook it.

There was a sudden move above them.

“What do you think you’re doing, McBain?” they heard Blair say.

Suddenly, light streamed in on the faces of the boys, and staring down at them was Owen McBain. At first, both they and the thin man were startled into

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immobility. Then McBain started to laugh—a weird, , high laugh.

“Oh, this is good,” he was saying. “Witnesses, no less! Look, Blair.” McBain parted the branches.

“That’s the oldest trick in the world. Don’t try it on me,” rasped Blair.

“Look—I’ll step back,” said McBain. “Just come and see for yourself.”

But the boys didn’t wait to see if Blair would come and look. They began to scramble on all fours under the limbs of the trees, toward the shelter of the boulder where they might have a couple of seconds’ chance to break for the forest behind the rock.

Then they were erect and running like mad. From behind them, they heard a shot, but the shot was not aimed at them. They looked back and saw Gizmo and McBain grappling with Bill Blair. The technician had been so startled by the sudden activity in the bushes that he had allowed his vigilance to wander. In that instant, Gizmo

and McBain were at his throat.

“Let’s get out of here before they settle that and get around to us,” Biff shouted. And they took off on a dead run for the woods.

## CHAPTER XIX

### ‘Lodge Where Moon Hides’

THEY were running with their heads low, not knowing how long it might be before shots would be whizzing their way. It was obvious Bill Blair couldn’t stand up long against Gizmo and McBain, and once these two got possession of the firearms, they would be after the boys.

“This way,” puffed Biff, heading into the edge of the woods and ducking toward some dense underbrush.

“Wait,” Tish yelled. “The plane is the other way.”

Biff stopped and looked back.

The area behind the two boulders was clear all the way to the mountainside. There was little chance they could run back in the direction they had come without being seen by McBain and Gizmo.

“We’ll have to lead them into the woods, try to shake them, and circle back,” Biff said.

They ducked into the underbrush and began to run deeper into the woods. Then Biff stopped again.

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“Wait,” he said. “We’re liable to get too far ahead.” , Tish obviously couldn’t believe his ears. “Too far ahead?”

“Yes,” Biff said, listening for sounds of pursuit. “We’ve got to get them chasing us. If they stop and think, they’re going to figure out how we got here, and they’ll head for our airplane. Then we really will be stranded.”

Tish nodded solemnly. He looked to their left where the sound of the tumbling glacial stream could be heard. To the right, loomed the mountain ridge and beyond that, Ghost Glacier.

“Looks to me like we’re squeezed in between the river and the mountain,” the Eskimo boy said. “And they are getting closer together

every minute.”

*Whiiiiing!*

The rifle shot whizzed over their heads.

“First things first,” Biff shouted, ducking and running low.

For five minutes, they ran without talking. When they stopped to listen, they could hear the sounds of pursuit quite clearly.

After running awhile longer, Biff slid under some cedar saplings. Their boughs were coated with soft snow, but underneath it was dry. He cupped his hand behind his ear.

“Does that sound like one or two men behind us?” he asked.

Tish listened. “One man,” he said softly. Then turning his head, he listened for sounds off toward the glacial stream. “I think they have split up to stop us

from getting across that stream. They want to keep us in this box between the water and the mountain,” he said.

“Let’s see if we can cross them up,” said Biff, veering toward the sound of rushing water.

They reached the edge of the woods and looked across a wide gravel bar at the cascading waters. Rocks and boulders littered the bed of the stream, and in spots, the water formed deep-looking pools.

“Can you swim?” Biff asked.

“Eskimos can’t swim,” Tish said. “Where would we practice?”

“Doesn’t matter anyway,” Biff said. “It’s too risky. We’d be sitting ducks trying to cross right out in the open.”

“You’re so right,” Tish whispered. He pointed toward the far bank.

There, weaving his way through the trees, was Owen McBain, automatic in hand.

“Blair’s gun,” Biff whispered, ducking low and starting to fade back into the trees.



*Whiiiiing!*

A shot zinged over their head and whined off through the woods.

“Good thing those hand guns aren’t too accurate at this distance,” said Tish.

*Whing!* Closer now.

“Yeah-good thing,” Biff agreed, dodging from tree to tree.

They stayed away from low-limbed trees so as not to shake the branches and give away their position.

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“I think it’s time to try to give them the slip and circle back to the *Tumblebug*” Tish said when they stopped for a moment to listen for sounds of pursuit.

“How about the mountain?” Biff said. “If we can’t squeeze between Gizmo and the mountain, maybe we could go back to the ship along the side of the mountain.”

They decided to go look. As they came closer to the mountain, the trees began to thin and the under-footing became gravelly.

“No trouble hiding our trail here,” Biff said hap-

P11^ Tish was looking back into the woods.

“Look!” he whispered.

Far off through the trees they could see a bobbing head, thrashing along on the trail they had left. This was McBain coming from the direction of the river.

From the west, toward the boulder where the chase had begun, they could hear dim sounds of Gizmo’s progress through the woods.

“They’re closing the pincers on us,” Biff muttered.

“If we keep running east, we’re going to run right into the place where the stream and the mountain meet. Then we will be in a box,” Tish said. “We’ve got to figure a way to squeeze between Gizmo and this mountain.”

They began to search the side of the mountain for an escape route. The slopes were bare and bleak, providing no natural cover for concealment. But suddenly, Biff's eye caught sight of a dark opening in the rocks.

"Is that a cave?" he said.

"Sure is," said Tish. "Let's see what it looks like."

They weaved their way across the gravelly surface toward the opening, careful to keep their tracks concealed. The cave was about fifteen feet above the gravel floor; and while they clawed their way to the cave entrance, they were completely exposed. But no shots came from the woods.

They edged cautiously into the cave, trying to adapt their eyes to the change in light. Suddenly, Tish sniffed and grabbed Biff's arm.

"Oh, oh," the Eskimo boy whispered. "There's somebody home."

Biff peered through the darkness. Tish was right. There, toward the back of the cave, was a hulking heap of dark, bristly fur.

"Bear?" whispered Biff.

"Still hibernating," Tish answered softly.

Biff edged toward the cave entrance and looked out. "Now we are in a jam," he whispered. "If we try to get back down to the trees, they'll surely see us."

Tish was looking toward this slumbering bear. The beast was grunting and wheezing in his sleep. The Eskimo stepped out of the cave, looked on either side, then stepped back in.

"We need a decoy," he said. "And this old boy may belt."

"The bruin?" Biff said, grinning in spite of their predicament.

Tish smiled impishly. "It's time for him to be get-

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ting up anyway," he said. "We've got to make sure he gets up on the wrong side of the bed-their side." He pointed out toward the forest as he spoke. Then, motioning to Biff to follow, he stepped outside the cave and looked around. He took out his knife and cut off a branch of

a nearby scrub cedar which was clinging to the rock. He scraped away, collected some of the pitch oozing from the bark and covered one of the cones on the branch with it. He asked Biff for his handkerchief and began to tear it into tatters. Wrapping this around the branch, he then struck a match and lighted the cloth, which started to smoke. Soon the pitch had caught.

With a great crackling, the torch began to burn and the smoke to boil up into the air.

Biff was looking off toward the forest.

“They’ll see this,” he said. Then, wrinkling his nose, “Or smell it,” he added.

“They may be too busy to care.” Tish laughed, picking up a melon-sized rock. “Okay, here we go- be ready.”

The Eskimo boy edged into the cave. Biff watched him creep toward the slumbering bear. Slowly Tish raised the rock over his head and with a great howl, he smashed the missile down squarely on the bear’s black nose.

With a great roar the bear came awake, heaving himself to his feet and thrashing out with his huge paw.

Tish came tearing out of the cave and jumped to one side. “Be ready,” he shouted.

Biff took a firm grip on the flaming torch.

The inside of the cave rattled with the bear’s growls of fury. Suddenly, the entrance was filled with the shape of the huge beast. He was groping his way into the sunlight, staggering with the stiffness of his long slumber and blinking in the bright sunlight.

He had taken two steps toward the edge of the ledge, pawing at his sore nose and trying to get his bearings, when Tish let out an ear-splitting scream. The bear turned to locate the source of the sound, and when he did, Tish yelled, “Now, Biff!”

Biff thrust the flaming torch close to the animal’s face.

The startled bear staggered backward, teetered on the edge of the ledge, and with great flailing of legs, fell backward off the shelf and rolled over and over down the short incline to the gravel bottom.

The animal was bellowing in blind fury now. He spun around, trying to get his bearings. He staggered into the limb of a tree, flailed at it, then tottered toward another.

And then the boys saw McBain. He was hurrying through the woods toward the sound of the bear. They crouched back in the cave, watching the tall man. He hadn't yet seen the animal.

But as McBain stepped out of the trees, he suddenly saw the angry beast. They saw his mouth fly open in surprise. The bear was reeling toward him, and it was evident that in his panic and surprise the tall man thought the bear was coming at him. He raised his pistol, fired—and missed.

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Then the bear did see him. The beast rose, dropped ‘to all fours and started lumbering toward his adversary.

McBain fired three quick shots to which the beast paid absolutely no attention. At that, McBain broke and ran, the bear in close pursuit.

“Now,” said Biff, and they scrambled out of the cave. Throwing caution to the winds, they slid down the mountainside and started to run toward the edge of the woods in the direction of their plane.

They were certain that Gizmo must have heard the shouts of McBain by now and was probably on his way to a rendezvous with the bear. The boys ran pell-mell, flinging limbs aside and ignoring any trail they might be leaving.

They heard some shots in the forest behind them and knew that the two men had probably come to grips with the bear. McBain's automatic, they knew, was useless against the animal, but Gizmo's rifle could probably bring the beast down. Of course, there was always the chance that the bear might win.

Biff was leading the way through the woods and had just broken out into a small clearing, when he happened to glance back toward the mountain. There, in a grove of trees in the permanent shade of the mountainside, was a cabin!

Biff stared at the cabin. From one of the two windows came a soft glow, as though there were an oil lamp inside. But it was obvious the cabin was old and deserted.

The blond boy listened for any sounds of pursuit,

then motioned to Tish, and they hurried toward the cabin.

Walking slowly toward the window, Biff looked inside. Then he turned to Tish and pointed to a row of black rocks lined up on the window sill.

“Tish, we’ve found it,” said Biff. “This must be the ‘Lodge Where Moon Hides.’ “

## CHAPTER XX

### Shaky Decision

THE boys pushed open the cabin door. As they did, one of the leather hinges gave and the door sagged.

It was dark and musty within the cabin, but as their eyes became accustomed to the gloom, they could see that there was a bookcase along one wall.

A table stood near the middle of the room. On it, a single table place had been set, as though ready for someone who had never come.

The bedclothes on a bunk near the other wall had been torn to shreds by rats in search of nesting material, and the floor was strewn with litter blown in through the windows. A few moldy clothes hung on nails about the cabin, and on the wall was a calendar.

Biff peered at the calendar. It was fifteen years old!

“This is it,” Biff whispered. “This was Lank Leo-minister’s cabin, and those rocks on the window sill must be Moon Ore. I’ll bet the few Indians who had the nerve to come near here, saw the glow from the ore, and that’s why the place is called, ‘The Lodge Where Moon Hides.’ “

“Then Bill Blair was closer than he thought,” Tish said.

“He said that a clue to the exact location of the main deposit of Moon Ore could be found here,” Biff said. “I wonder if he knew what he was talking about?”

“If there are any clues here, the rats have long since eaten ‘em,” Tish said.

Biff looked again at the calendar on the wall. Reaching up, he took the document down and walked toward the light at the cabin door.

“There’s something written on some of the dates here,” he said quietly.

“Anything important?” Tish asked.

“Looks like a record of earthquakes,” Biff said. “April yth, an earthquake here, 1912.” Biff read. He leafed back through the calendar. On date after date, someone had made a record of quakes which had occurred on each of these dates.

Biff scratched his head. “I wonder why Lank Leo-minister was so interested in earthquakes,” he said.

“I’d sure like to know, too,” Tish said, “but right now I suggest we start moving. I have an idea our two pals back in the woods may be done with the bear and come along any minute now.”

Biff was leafing through the calendar. “Lank must have collected seismographic information from all over the world to get a record of earthquakes up here,” he said. “You know those seismographs can chart an earthquake thousands of miles off.”

“I hope you’re not forgetting that we had a quake

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*yesterday*” Tish said. “It snapped off the end of Ghost Glacier and dropped it on our landing strip, remember?”

“Tish, I’m beginning to get this,” Biff said. “It’s beginning to mean something.”

“Can’t it mean something while we’re running?” Tish pleaded, looking toward the woods from which they had just fled.

Biff rolled up the calendar, stuffed a couple of Moon Ore samples in his pocket and gave some to Tish. They poked their heads out the door, heard nothing, and bolted for the trees.

It was hard going in the forest. Seedlings sprouted everywhere beneath the tall evergreens, and the pine-needle litter under the trees made walking slippery.

They knew that off to the north there was a clearer path to the plane, but they were afraid that their pursuers would be taking that route and might see them. They couldn't take a chance on Gizmo's marksmanship at this late date.

As they trudged toward their goal, Biff explained to Tish his theory. The record of earthquakes, he thought, was the clue to the movement of the elusive Moon Ore. The Indians for centuries had spoken of its existence but had never seemed sure of just where the magic mountain of glowing ore was.

"But that's because it wasn't any *one* place," Biff said. "It was lots of places. It was wherever the earthquakes moved it."

It certainly sounded logical, Tish agreed. And as Biff went on with his theory, the Eskimo began to ap-

predate what a complicated search the long-lost Lank Leominister had conducted.

Biff said that he felt sure the main deposit of Moon Ore had existed originally in one of the walls of the mountains that funneled Ghost Glacier on its trip toward the river. Over the centuries, numerous quakes in the area probably had dislodged the main deposit of ore or loosened it so that the glacier could carry it along as it slid toward the river. Lank Leominister obtained a record of earthquakes in this area, then charted the progress the ore probably made, quake by quake. He probably made a record of the speed with which the glacier moved plus where he found his ore samples. So, little by little, he began to creep up on the main deposit hidden down there in the glacier.

"Then the day he finds it, he loses his life," Tish concluded sadly.

"His work was done," Biff said quietly.

They walked along silently for a while, their minds occupied with the strange saga of the amazing Lank Leominister. They had been so engrossed in talking, the time had flown and only now did they realize they must be approaching the strip where they had left the plane. Suddenly, they heard a shot. Then another.

The boys stared at each other, for the shots were coming from the direction of the *Tumblebug*. They hurried through the woods, taking care to stay low. Then another sound reached their ears.

A plane engine! It was close at hand now-so close that they knew they must be near the end of the strip on which they had landed.

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A sense of foreboding crept over them as they ran toward the spot where they could hear the plane engine. They saw snow whirling in the air from the force of a plane propeller. Sliding forward on their stomachs under the trees, they looked out on the clearing they had left a few hours ago.

Taxiing down the faintly green strip toward them, was the blue airplane. At the controls sat Owen Mc-Bain. Beside him sat Gizmo. They watched McBain rev up the motor to warm it properly. Then with engine roaring, the blue plane sprinted into the wind and aided by the cold, heavy atmosphere, leaped into the air and zoomed out over the trees.

The moment the plane was in the air, Tish leaped from cover and was running down the strip toward the *Tumblebug*.

“Wait!” Biff yelled. “They might see you.”

“Can’t wait,” Tish shouted. “I think they shot holes in our gas tanks.”

Biff jumped from cover and took out after the Eskimo. They slid to a stop in front of the tiny plane they had hidden in the trees. But they saw immediately that their hiding place had been discovered. The concealing boughs had been ripped away and the wings laid bare.

Pouring from holes in each of the wing tanks, were two streams of dripping gasoline. Tish vaulted into the cabin, and a spare gasoline tin came flying out of the window.

“Under the tank,” he shouted.

Biff dashed to the tank, put the tin under it to catch the flow and then put his finger over the bullet hole

in the other tank. “Bring something for the other tank,” he yelled.

He could hear Tish rummaging about in the plane and soon the Eskimo was beside him with the only other container he could find. A canteen.



When Biff removed his finger from the hole in the left tank, he realized that Tish could have saved his energy. Only a few more drops of gasoline dripped from the left tank and then stopped altogether.

In a minute or two, the right tank had stopped draining.

Biff poured the little gasoline they had collected from the canteen into the big can, then shook it.

“How much?” he asked.

“Not very much,” said Tish. He looked at the holes in the gas tank. “But it may not matter,” he added, “because how are we going to plug these holes?”

They examined the tanks. Tish searched inside the *Tumblebug* for something they might use to plug the holes. But he could find nothing that fitted the purpose.

They paced up and down in front of the *Tumble-bug*. Suddenly, Tish reached down, scooped up a handful of snow and looked at the holes in the wing.

“Why not ice?” he said.

“How you going to do it?” Biff asked.

Tish felt in his pocket for matches; then he moved into the trees, gathered some kindling, and built a small fire. While the fire was getting hot, he filled the canteen with snow, held it over the fire until the snow had melted, then walked to the wing.

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Now that the sun had dropped low behind the trees it was cold here in the shade. It just might work. Too, the dripping gasoline, in evaporating, had supercooled the surface of the wing.

Slowly, Tish began to slosh water up on to the bottom of the wing. Almost immediately a thin film of ice began to form. Tish smiled, and Biff for once blessed the cold.

Ever so slowly the film of ice began to thicken. Soon it had formed a thin film over the hole itself. It was a slow process, but in about a half hour the ice coating on the underside of the wing was thick and white.

The hole was stopped up.

“That’s the only hole we have to worry about,” Tish said. “We don’t have any gas for the other tank anyway, and all we want to do is get to the mud flats and see if we can land. If we can’t, we’ll put down on top of the glacier and walk in.”

“Do we have enough gasoline?” Biff asked.

“I think so,” said Tish. “Let’s roll her out.”

They finished pulling boughs off the *Tumblebug* and rolled the tiny plane out into the clearing, pulling her all the way to the take-off end, so as not to waste gas on taxiing.

Tish checked the engine to make sure no damage had been done there. Apparently, their two pursuers had been in such a hurry, they had decided that the holes in the gas tanks would do the job.

The boys poured their small supply of gasoline into the right tank, tightened the cover, and climbed into the *Tumblebug*.

Tish started the engine. He wanned the tiny motor just as briefly as he dared, then crossed his fingers, held them up, and shoved the throttle forward.

The *Tumblebug* raced across the open space, bouncing like a fleeing rabbit; and with a sudden feeling of lightness, they were airborne.

Tish banked the ship out over the mountain ridge and then over the glacier. A few clouds dotted the sky, but they could see the tip of the glacier not too far ahead.

Then they saw something else. It was the blue airplane sitting on top of the glacier, and walking away from it, were McBain and Gizmo, toting the box of explosives between them!

## CHAPTER XXI

### Avalanche

FROM their altitude, the boys could see that McBain and Gizmo were heading toward a huge crevasse that seemed to begin at the center of the glacier and widen out as it reached the edge touching the mountain.

They were apparently downwind from the two men, since neither one acted as though he saw the plane.

“What do you think they’re up to?” Tish said.

“Well, that’s explosive and they are heading for that crevasse which I figure is awfully close to the mine.”

They looked back and could see sparkling water down near the bottom of the crevasse.

“I think they must have checked the pictures of the Lank Leominster papers and have decided that crevasse leads to the glacial stream which flows under the mine. I think they are going to try and float that stuff right under the mine and blow it up.”

Tish edged the throttle forward and nosed down

toward the tip of the glacier. “We’ve got to try and land to warn them at the mine,” he said.

Biff looked back and saw that McBain and Gizmo had reached the edge of the crevasse, and had set the wooden box down.

“Tish, we’ll be too late,” he said.

Tish looked at Biff, then down toward the place where the mud flats had been. There, on the narrow strip of mud still clear of ice, stood the *Williwaiv*!

Tish banked the plane hard and said, “We couldn’t get down now anyway-Shake’s got all the room. Let’s go see if we can do any good back there.”

Tish turned the plane and as they roared back down the glacier, they knew that this time the two men had seen them.

McBain looked up and pointed. When Gizmo started to move back toward the blue airplane, they saw the thin man reach out and grab him, gesturing toward the box.

Tish nosed down toward the two men, not knowing what good it might do to buzz the pair, but determined to make their job as difficult as possible.

The little ship dived straight at the men and as they zoomed over just a few feet above the heads of the pair, they saw them duck

involuntarily and then start to lower the wooden box over the edge of the crevasse with a rope.

Tish stood the *Tumblebug* up on one wing, made a tight turn, and headed back toward the pair struggling with the box.

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This time Tish looked as if he were about to part the hair of Owen McBain; and as the little plane went into a snarling dive, the mountain walls echoed with the din. Suddenly, Biff noticed a stirring in the snow on the slopes of the mountain.

“Tish! Look!” he cried. “You’re loosening the snow. You’re starting an avalanche!”

Tish pulled back on the wheel as the *Tumblebug* zoomed over the heads of the two men. Biff was right, the snow high on the mountain had begun to slide. One more pass would do it. And if the slide were big enough, it could fill the crevasse so full of snow that the two characters on the glacier would have to pack up and go home.

Tish banked the *Tumblebug* again, spiraling back toward the pair and watching the snow on the mountainside from the corner of his eye.

And then the engine coughed!

Their short gas supply had caught up with them.

The *Tumblebug*’s snarl dimmed to a stutter, then to a powerless cough.

Tish began to search the glacier surface for a spot to sit down. He didn’t have much choice with a dead stick and knew it would have to be close to the blue airplane.

They glided almost soundlessly over the heads of the two men; and as they floated by, Gizmo looked up and shook his fist.

Biff saw the Indian drop the rope attached to the box and run for the blue airplane.

The *Tumblebug* touched down and raced across the ice. When they glided to a stop, there was not a sputter left in the tiny engine.

Biff and Tish piled out of the plane, looking back toward the two men and the airplane about a hundred yards away.

Gizmo was climbing out of the blue airplane with the rifle in his hand. They saw him rest the gun barrel on one of the wing supports and take careful aim at them.

“Duck!” Biff shouted and they dived behind the skis of the *Tumblebug*.

*Whiting!* A shot whirred over their heads and the sound rattled off the mountain walls. Then close on its heels a fearsome rumbling began. It seemed to shake the glacier and fill the whole icy valley with sound.

The snow, loosened originally by the *Tumblebug*, had been released by the reverberation of Gizmo’s rifle shot. It began to cascade off the sides of the mountain and as its warning sound reached the men below, the boys saw Owen McBain drop the rope holding the box and start to run.

Gizmo turned, saw the huge avalanche sweeping down upon them, and raced after McBain.

But the men were too late. Slowly, inevitably, the sliding whiteness behind them began to gain. And like a great ocean wave, it swept over the men and over the blue airplane. Great clouds of dusty snow rose high into the air, enveloping the whole scene and obliterating even the side of the mountain from view.

For fully two minutes the thunder of the fearful

avalanche echoed and re-echoed between the mountain walls. During it all, the two boys crouched by the *Tumblebug* fearful that the sound would set off still another snowslide that might reach them even out in the middle of the glacier.

But gradually the sound subsided, and the great slide stopped. When the dust had settled, there was nothing where the two men and the blue plane had been save a great pile of ice and snow.

It was almost anti-climactic when, a moment later, they heard a dull explosion far beneath the snow. It sounded puny indeed beside the spectacle that nature had just unleashed.

The boys were breathing as hard as if they had been fleeing from the avalanche. In fact, they were so awe-stricken and excited that for a moment they failed to hear the hum of a plane engine overhead.

When they did look up, Tish shouted, "It's the *Williwaw*!"

Shake zoomed low, wagged his wings, and climbed to make a turn. They pulled the *Tumblebug* out of the way in order that Shake could set the *Williwaw* down. As he glided to a stop, Shake opened the door, looked toward the avalanche, and said, "I saw it all from the air. Come on, get in."

They climbed in beside the pilot, who took off into the stiff wind.

There was a celebration going on at the mine. The boys could hear it the moment they entered the broken end of the entrance tunnel. They hastened toward the living quarters in the mine buggy. As they skidded into

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the main tunnel, they saw Biff's dad and Corbin Davis dancing a jig.

"The mother lode! The mother lode! We have found the mother lode," the men were singing.

When had it happened?

Just now, the men explained. Suddenly, the waters of the glacial stream set every Geiger counter in the mine to clicking. The whole river was full of the ore.

Shake and the two boys looked at each other and grinned. Time enough later to tell the men that it had been the avalanche let loose by the *Tumblebug*, plus the explosive dropped in the crevasse which had finally found the long-missing Moon Ore. It had been accomplished, and that was all that really mattered. Besides, Biff told himself, they would have found it anyway with the earthquake clue that Lank had furnished on his calendar.

Every man in the mine was shocked to hear that Bill Blair had been involved in the plot to wreck the mine. Even the investigator from Washington had been surprised by the news. He was in the mine when Biff and Tish came back from their experience on the glacier. He told them that he had trailed the infamous Owen McBain halfway

across the world, had lost him in Seattle, and had only recently picked him up again here in Alaska. McBain was a notorious spy who had sold Gizmo on helping him by convincing him that the miners were violating the sacred ground of his ancestors.

Bill Blair had joined in the man's plot in a misguided moment and had become so deeply involved that he

was afraid to back out until McBain tried to kill him. The gang's plan had been to discourage the miners into abandoning the project. They were then going to look for the Moon Ore on their own, and smuggle the radioactive material out of the country by way of the North Pole. In this isolated section of the world, that would have been easy to do.

The investigator received Biff and Tish's assurance that McBain and Gizmo had been lost in the avalanche and that these two men must have killed Blair back in Little Smokey Valley. A subsequent search proved this to be true.

It was a great party that night, and no one minded at all that it was necessary to send all hands down the various shafts and wells to clear the debris that had collected in the glacial stream because of the avalanche and the explosion.

Biff was at the bottom of the cooling shaft, fending off the bergs that were floating by, threatening to foul up the delicate apparatus. He was so happy that he was actually whistling.

But suddenly, he began to get a funny feeling-as though someone were looking at him. Slowly, he turned and stared off into the darkness. Something was glowing in the dimness-something that looked like-

Biff flashed his light toward the sight in the darkness. He told himself that what he saw just could not be. But his flashlight dropped from his nerveless fingers, and when he picked it up, he did not flash it that way again.

Instead he signaled the mine crew to pull him to the surface. And when Tish saw him, Biff had a strange look in his eyes.

"Buddy," said Biff. "I'm sorry."

"For what?" Tish asked.

“For being so cussed logical,” said Biff, his eyes beginning to clear now.

Slowly the Eskimo began to smile. “Aw, I looked up this ghost thing in the library,” he said. “I understand that lots of people have been lost in these crevasses, and sometimes they turn up years later-looking just the way they did the day they disappeared. Happens all the time in Alaska. Don’t you know ghosts are just an old superstition!”

But at the celebration dinner that night, when it came time to take bows, Biff Brewster’s father rose, and holding his glass of party punch high, he said, “Of all the debts we owe, we owe the most to Lank Leo-minister, our host.”

“Our host?” Corbin Davis repeated.

“The ghost host,” Tom Brewster said, with a wink at Biff.

THE END

ALASKA GHOST GLACIER MYSTERY

By ANDY ADAMS

No. 6 in the Biff Brewster Mystery Adventure series